

Hammad Mustafa al-Madani al-Qadri | The Muslim  
World Today *pg. 1*

Dr. Ghazala Qadri | Khul' and Compensation:  
Must a Woman Purchase her Freedom? *pg. 11*

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, Most Compassionate, Ever-Merciful.





# EDITORIAL BRIEF

Issue 02/ Summer 2023





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## Introduction

*Al-Nahda* (Renaissance) is a publication with a focus on rekindling classical Muslim values in a contemporary context. This publication invites scholars, notable figures, and thought/industry leaders to share their knowledge on a wide variety of topics. *Al-Nahda* publishes a seasonal magazine and shares knowledge from its contributing authors.

## Our Vision

*Al-Nahda* (Renaissance) will aim to rekindle the social, cultural, scientific and intellectual dimensions of Muslim thought through contemporary discussion.

## The Use of Artificial Intelligence

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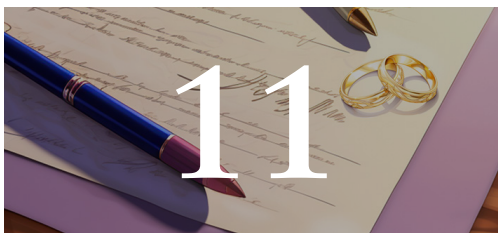


# CONTENTS



**The Muslim World Today: The Golden Age and the Importance of Investing into Education, Research and Development**

*Hammad Mustafa al-Madani al-Qadri*



**Khul‘ and Compensation: Must a Woman Purchase her Freedom?**

*Dr. Ghazala Qadri*



**Finding and Being Your True Self: Identity Loss in the Era of Social Media**

*Safyah Akhtar Malik*



**Unlocking the Fountain of Youth: The Science of Healthspan and Strength Training as a Muslim**

*Dr. Wassim Drissi*



**Truth Amidst Misinformation: Into the Multiverse of AI**

*Ali Ahmed Malik*



**The Motivated Muslim: Bridging Neuroscience and Islamic Wisdom**

*Dr. Abdullah Raja*



**Nature: A Path To Strengthen Our Relationship With Allah and His Beloved Messenger ﷺ**

*Dr. Madeeha Mian Drissi*



# AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

## Hammad Mustafa al-Madani al-Qadri



Hammad Mustafa Qadri is a Masters graduate and PhD Candidate at the prestigious London School of Economics and Political Science in International Relations. He is also a graduate in International Relations from the 'Margaret MacMillan Trinity One Programme' at the University of Toronto. He holds many global advisory designations for NGOs such as Minhaj-ul-Quran International.

## Dr. Ghazala Qadri



Dr. Ghazala Qadri is President of Minhaj-ul-Quran Women League International. She is a motivational speaker and holds regular organisational training camps and spiritual retreats. Her primary area of interest is female empowerment, strengthening the family unit and the challenges faced by Muslim women and modernity. Born in the UK, she obtained her law degree from the University of Southampton and is a qualified solicitor. Afterwards she obtained her doctorate from the University of Birmingham from the Department of Theology, Philosophy and Religion.

## Safyah Akhtar Malik



Safyah Akhtar Malik completed a BSc(Hons) in Medical Biology at The University of Huddersfield and MSc in Digital Marketing Leadership at the University of Aberdeen. She currently works as Head of Growth at The Skills Network and serves as a member of several international advisory boards. As a Muslim professional in the EdTech sector she writes on growth, technology and marketing, and likes relating this to Islam. In her spare time she loves to sketch, go for a jog and spend time with her husband and two children.



## Dr. Wassim Drissi



Dr. Wassim Drissi received his medical education from the Idaho College of Osteopathic Medicine. He is presently undergoing his Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation residency at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Beyond the clinic, Dr. Drissi is an avid sports enthusiast, passionately engaging in triathlons, climbing, and snowboarding. This fervor for human-powered sports seamlessly integrates into his professional aspiration: to empower every individual to harness their inner athlete.

## Ali Ahmed Malik



Ali Ahmed Malik is an Economics and Management (BSc) student at The London School of Economics and a Senior Product Manager and investor at Surf. He's passionate about AI, the data economy, and sustainability, with a history of professional advisory to many tech start-ups. Ali has also served on the board to national charities in Canada and as the UN Youth Ambassador for Canada. In his spare time, he enjoys reading, exploring new cafes and living as a digital nomad.

## Dr. Abdullah Raja



Dr. Abdullah Raja is an award winning neuroscientist completing his MD degree at McMaster University. His research involves studying the neuronal links which cause aggression & motivation and the causes behind why these emotions are found on a spectrum from human to human. He is also a motivational speaker, speaking on TEDx and platforms locally. He has completed his Dars-e-Nizami, MA in Islamic Studies & PhD in Hadith Sciences, he aims to bridge the gap between Islamic and Academic Sciences to empower the Muslim youth to reconnect with the spirit of Islam.

## Dr. Madeeha Mian Drissi



Dr. Madeeha Mian Drissi completed her medical school at Texas A&M College of Medicine and is currently in her Dermatology residency. Her field of study encourages her to write on the intersection of medical sciences and Islam. In her free time, she enjoys outdoor adventures with her husband, especially climbing and snowboarding.



# The Muslim World Today: The Golden Age and the Importance of Investing into Education, Research and Development

*Hammad Mustafa al-Madani al-Qadri*





## Introduction

Muslim civilisations flourished in the Islamic Golden Age with respect to scientific, technological, and philosophical advancements because state institutions encouraged creative pursuits, intellectual achievements and invested heavily in research and education. Today, Muslim states and governments must direct their financial resources toward research and education, which can unlock immense potential for scientific, technological, and intellectual output.

The Muslim world was once home to *intellectual* progress and *enlightenment* between the 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Today, Muslim countries have fallen behind in the domain of research and scientific publications, technological innovations, and educational institutions. The burden can mainly be attributed to Muslim governments and states' lack of investment in creative and intellectual endeavours. The *age of enlightenment, scientific and technological advancement* can be rekindled if Muslim states and governments invest their vast financial resources into research, development, and education. The legacy of the city of knowledge, *Baghdad*, can be rediscovered with the proper allocation of Muslim capital and resources.

## These Endeavours

The Islamic Golden Age (7th-12th century) flourished in science, technology, philosophy, and innovation because the Abbasid Empire invested heavily in this academic endeavour. At the behest of educationally motivated leaders, such as *Al-Mansur*, *Al-Ma'mun*, and *Harun al-Rashid*, the city of Baghdad became the international capital of knowledge, research, and enlightenment. State and government *investment, encouragement* and *backing* are the core reason behind educational progress in the Golden Age and this spirit must be rediscovered in the Muslim world today.<sup>1</sup>

'Abbasid Caliph Al-Ma'mun ruled Baghdad for twenty-years (813-833), inspiring an age of rationalism in the Muslim world. This was the "pinnacle of the 500-year Islamic Golden Age" according to Eamon Gearon.<sup>2</sup>

Al-Ma'mun was motivated by Greek logic and rationalism, and he directed this ethos into the educational institutions of Baghdad. This move inspired a generation of Muslim medical experts, scientists, mathematicians, astronomers, and polymaths.<sup>3</sup> Therefore the backing of the state and government is always essential for paving the way for educational, scientific, and technological progress.



## The European Enlightenment Was Inspired by the Islamic Golden Age

The Islamic Golden Age did not decline necessarily because of the Mongol invasion of Baghdad in 1258 and the destruction of *Bayt al-Hikmah* (the House of Wisdom) and the libraries and archives. Although the Mongol invasion served as a trigger for the eventual disintegration of the city of knowledge and the Muslim detachment from enlightenment and intellectual pursuits, this is not entirely an accurate assessment. Jim al-Khalili makes a strong case that there was not really an intellectual *decline* in the Muslim world after the Mongol ransacking of Baghdad in 1258.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Al-Khalili argues that dozens of cities like Baghdad, *centres of knowledge, learning and academia* had emerged by the 13th and 14th century in North Africa, Spain, Persia, and Central Asia. What seems like a decline of the *Golden Age* and *Muslim intellectual achievements* was a diversification of *knowledge centres* among numerous cities in the Muslim world. Spanning from *Nishapur, Delhi, Samarqand*, to *Constantinople*.<sup>5</sup>

1 Jim Al-Khalili, *The House of Wisdom How Arabic Science Saved Ancient Knowledge and Gave us the Renaissance*, (The Penguin press, 2011), pg. 64-68.

2 Eamonn Gearon, *The History and Achievements of the Islamic Golden Age*, (The Teaching Company, 2017), pg. 4.

3 Gearon, 5.

4 Al-Khalili, 255.

5 Al-Khalili, 255-256.



The al-Zitouna Mosque | Carthage Magazine

The West experienced an *enlightenment* on the back of the Islamic Golden Age. Jonathan Lyons argues that Muslim intellectual achievements “transmuted the backward West into a scientific and technological superpower”.<sup>6</sup> The West experienced the *Dark Ages* during this period with respect to *scientific discovery*, *rational pursuits*, and *technological innovations*. The awakening in the West occurred because of the academic legacy of the Islamic Golden Age and especially the endeavours in the city of Baghdad. Caliph Al-Mansur was the mastermind behind the city of knowledge. Al-Mansur was inspired by the great intellectual achievements of the Persian Kings, Greek philosophy, and Indian legacy. Bayt al-Hikmah (the House of Wisdom) was commissioned to translate Persian, Greek and Indian works.<sup>7</sup>

It is important to recognise the centrality of *state* encouragement and impetus in research production and educational development. Al-Mansur, al-Ma'mun, and Harun al-Rashid; all these Abbasid statesmen were personally fascinated with scientific discovery, rationality, technology, and academia. Together, they inspired the vast academy and libraries in the *House of Wisdom* and the legacy of knowledge that emerged in the period between 7th-12th centuries. The first university in recorded history was established in Tunis in 737, *al-Zaytunah*, and then “*Qarawiyyin*” by Fatima al-Fihriyya in Fez in 859.<sup>8</sup> To put this into context, the University of Oxford was established in 1096. Bayt al-Hikmah in Baghdad was established in the mid-8th century.

6 Jonathan Lyons, *The House of Wisdom How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilisation*, (Bloomsbury Press, 2009), pg. 10.

7 Lyons, 10.

8 Firas Alkhateeb, *Lost Islamic History Reclaiming Muslim Civilisation from the Past*, (Hurst & Company, 2014), pg. 53.



## Remarkable Scientific, Technological and Philosophical Contributions

There are certain notable achievements of the Muslim era that later benefitted Europeans and the West. Christopher Columbus learned from Muslim geographical and mathematic models suggesting symmetry in the earth, which inspired “Columbus to sail west”.<sup>9</sup> Certain European explorers actually “misread” Abbasid sources on the size of the earth, leading them to believe the earth was actually “20 percent the size it actually is”, encouraging them to sail toward the *new world* and expecting the journey to be a whole lot shorter.<sup>10</sup> With respect to the geography and mapping of the world, King Roger II commissioned Muslim geographer Muhammad al-Idrisi to create the most advanced map of the world in 1154 known as *Tabula Rogerina*.<sup>11</sup>

Muslim architecture also inspired Europeans when it comes to the designs of Gothic buildings, Cathedrals and especially the concept of the “pointed arch”.<sup>12</sup> Europeans were fascinated by Muslim architects and their “masonry techniques”, their “technical” precision, “drawings”, all of which offered “geometric principles unknown to the West”.<sup>13</sup> Even more remarkable was the way Muslim astronomers paved the way for later scientists’ propagation of the “celestial revolution” which sought to arrange the “sun rather than the earth at the centre of the universe”.<sup>14</sup> Nicolaus Copernicus advanced this idea in the 16th century.<sup>15</sup>



Umayyad Period Architecture Comparison to Gothic Style - LA Times

## Intellectual Breakthroughs and Innovations

The Islamic Golden Age produced many great scientists, philosophers, mathematicians, and intellectuals of high standing. Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khawarizmi (780-850) was among the great mathematicians of this era who developed ideas upon Indian mathematics, adding the “zero” and establishing “al-Jabrah” known as algebra now.<sup>16</sup> Ibn Sina (Avicenna) was a great polymath of the Golden Age and responsible for philosophical, medical, and intellectual innovations.



Ibn Sina proved through “clinical observations” that diseases could spread through “air, water and soil”.<sup>17</sup> Ibn Sina also argued in his *Canon of Medicine* that medical drugs could not simply be relied upon based on theory, but they must be examined and tested under “controlled conditions” to ascertain whether they could treat a disease.<sup>18</sup> Ibn Sina also spoke about the connection between the mind and physical health. Ibn Sina argued “negative thoughts” could cause physical health issues as much as “toxins, injury or diet”.<sup>19</sup> This is also the central view of Hungarian Canadian medical researcher Dr. Gabor Mate in his book *When the Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress*.<sup>20</sup>

9 Lyons, 100.

10 Lyons, 100-102.

11 Lyons, 118.

12 Lyons, 118.

13 Lyons, 118.

14 Lyons, 199.

15 Lyons, 199-200.

16 Alkhateeb, 55-56.

17 Alkhateeb, 60-61.

18 Alkhateeb, 60-61.

19 Alkhateeb, 60-63.

20 Dr. Gabor Mate, *When the Body Says No The Hidden Cost of Stress*, (Vermilion, 2019).





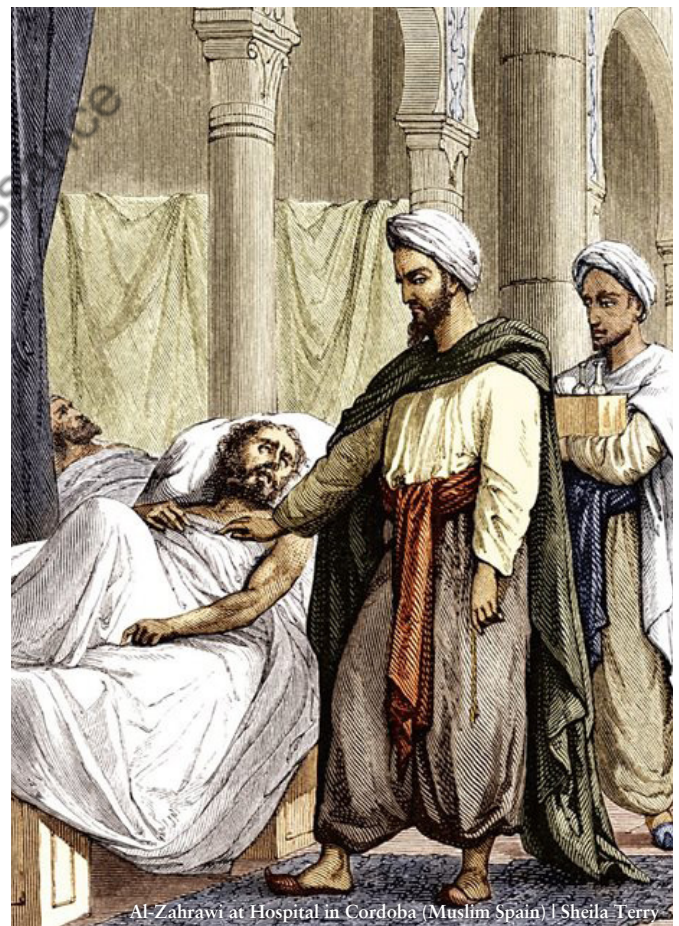
Ibn al-Haytham (960-1040) challenged Greek tradition which arrived at conclusions via philosophical discussion. Ibn al-Haytham believed “scientific theory can only be achieved through empirical study and examination”.<sup>21</sup> Al-Haytham made significant in-roads in academia, inspiring the enlightenment in the West during the 17th and 18th centuries by solidifying *empiricism* in the late 10th century.

Ptolemy argued the eye emits light rays which reflect off objects and return back into the eye, allowing you to see. Ibn al-Haytham challenged this through hundreds of clinical experiments, concluding Ptolemy’s theory was “impossible”. Ibn al-Haytham argued that light reflects off objects into the eye, allowing one to see.<sup>22</sup> Al-Haytham’s discovery laid the foundation for development of the camera as he “experimented with light coming through a small opening in window shutters which formed an inverted image on the opposite wall.” This led to the technology behind the modern camera.<sup>23</sup>

Jabir ibn al-Hayyan was responsible for advancements in experimentation, especially in chemical sciences. Al-Hayyan emancipated chemistry from its basis in “superstition” and converted it into an “experimental science”.<sup>24</sup> Jabir bin al-Hayyan was a disciple of Imam Ja’afar al-Sadiq عليه السلام who himself was a polymath and a specialist in chemistry.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Ibn al-Nafis explained the “circulation of venous blood which passes into the heart and lungs through ventricles, which becomes oxygenated and arterial blood”.<sup>26</sup> These were some notable discoveries of Muslim scientists during the Golden Age that benefitted global academia for centuries to follow.

During the Islamic Golden Age, numerous technologies, machines, and devices were also invented. These include water clocks, chemistry lab equipment, crankshafts, water pumps, eyeglasses, drinking glasses and water-robots. Ismail al-Jazari designed “automatic machines, hand-washing systems, clocks and musical robots which worked on water”.<sup>27</sup> This period was remarkable for its philosophical, scientific, technological, and academic achievements.

Firas Alkhateeb argues “the greatest medical minds of all time would not have been able to accomplish great feats without the support of great institutions. The Muslim world of the Golden Ages, with its vast financial resources and strong political institutions, established some of the first hospitals in history.”<sup>28</sup> It was the backing and support of the ‘Abbasid Empire and its rulers that enabled the Islamic Golden Age.



Al-Zahrawi at Hospital in Cordoba (Muslim Spain) | Sheila Terry

21 Alkhateeb, 63-64.

22 Alkhateeb, 64.

23 Salim T.S. Al-Hassani, *1001 Inventions The Enduring Legacy of Muslim Civilisation*, (National Geographic, 2012), pg. 14.

24 Al-Khalili, 80.

25 Al-Khalili, 80.

26 Al-Hassani, 14-15.

27 Alkhateeb, 64-65.

28 Alkhateeb, 61-62.







As a result of this spirit of social progress, Baghdad offered free healthcare and hospitals for patients and the poorest of citizens as early as the 9th century. Many contemporary countries in the 21st century still do not offer universal health care, whereas such institutions spread in the “Muslim world, between the 10th and 14th century, in Baghdad, Mecca, Cairo, Damascus, Medina and Granada”.<sup>29</sup> For any collective progress to materialise in the Muslim World, the backing of Muslim governments and heads of states is imperative.

## The Importance of Investing in Education, Research and Development in the Muslim World Today

Moving forward, Muslim countries today must realise the importance of investing in research and development (R & D) and become intellectual powerhouses like the bygone *Golden Age*. National progress, whether political, economic, or social, is heavily linked with advanced technology and science. This can only be achieved if Muslim countries direct a larger share of their financial resources towards educational institutions, research, and academic output. The Muslim world must become the global centre of *knowledge, enlightenment, scientific discovery, and technological advancement*.

Unfortunately, since the late 1990s, Muslim countries on average have only spent about 1 percent of their GDP on research and development, in comparison to developed countries which spent approximately five times more.<sup>30</sup> This is both remarkable and shocking for the Muslim world. Once known for being the capital of knowledge and wisdom, Muslim countries have fallen behind the rest of the world. According to data from “UNESCO and the World Bank, twenty countries from the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) spent only 0.34 percent of their total GDP on scientific research between 1996-2003”.<sup>31</sup>

Whereas this is only “one-seventh in comparison to the global average at 2.36 percent”.<sup>32</sup> This is again an astounding figure considering the vast *energy wealth* OIC countries own.

In 1981, COMSTECH in collaboration with the OIC discovered that Muslim countries only had 10 technicians, engineers, and scientists per 1000 people in comparison to the 40 global average.<sup>33</sup> The Royal Society’s Atlas of the Islamic World-Science and Innovation suggests that 17 Arab countries within the OIC produced 13,444 scientific publications in the year 2005, compared to 15,455 produced by Harvard University alone”.<sup>34</sup> These figures demonstrate the degree of regression the Muslim world has faced in research and development. The Muslim world must reverse this and strive to invest more of their GDP on education, research, development, technology, and the grassroots. The vision and determination of *al-Mansur, al-Ma’mun, and Harun al-Rashid* must be replicated today.

Muslim countries are not spending nearly enough share of their gross domestic product (GDP) and vast wealth on ‘research’, ‘development’, ‘education’, ‘technology’ and ‘science’. Hamdi Khalfaoui and Hassan Guenchi state that “The United Nations Development Programme report (2002) states that Muslim countries are classified as underdeveloped countries characterised by low gross domestic product (GDP), high poverty, high illiteracy, technical and technological backwardness, and an inadequate and ineffective institutional framework where it exists. Except for oil countries, which are not necessarily rich, Muslim countries generally suffer from chronic budget deficits, average life expectancy and low purchasing power”.<sup>35</sup> The general underdevelopment of Muslim countries can be reversed by investing a greater share of financial resources on education, as this will improve economic indicators and research output, therefore paving the way for greater technological advancement.

29 Alkhateeb, 61-62.

30 Al-Khalili, 265.

31 Al-Khalili, 265.

32 Al-Khalili, 265.

33 Al-Khalili, 265.

34 Al-Khalili, 265.

35 Hamdi Khalfaoui and Hassan Guenchi, *Does Islam promote growth: evidence from Arab Muslim countries and non-Arab Muslim countries*, 3 August 2021, Emerald Insight, pg. 4.

## Education Leads to Economic, Social and Political Growth

Agung Suwandaru, Thamer Alghamdi and Nurwanto Nurwanto make a case for this by citing the success of Indonesia: since its government opted to spend 20% of the state budget on education, economic growth has increased.<sup>36</sup> They argue that there is a positive relationship between public expenditure on the educational sector and economic growth in Indonesia.<sup>37</sup> This is an exemplary case for the Muslim world. In Indonesia, between 2009-2014, education became the second largest subsidised state expense. Whereas in 2015, education became the largest government expenditure. This is a significant landmark precedent for a Muslim country with respect to investing the largest share of its state budget on education.<sup>38</sup>

Recently, six Muslim countries including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, UAE, Bahrain, and Qatar have also witnessed an increase in economic output as a result of an increase in educational expenditure between 1977-2004.<sup>39</sup> Investing a greater share of state finances into education certainly results in growth in economic indicators according to these studies. This is the way forward for the Muslim world.

Mehmet Mercan and Sevgi Sezer also makes the case that an increase in state expenditure on education has had a positive impact on economic growth in Turkey between 1970-2012.<sup>40</sup> For this reason, by 2023, the Turkish government intends to spend 3 percent of its GDP on research and development, equivalent to the value of USD 60 billion.<sup>41</sup> Nigeria also intends to spend 0.5% of its GDP on technological innovation in 2023.<sup>42</sup> Morocco spends more than 26% of its GDP on education. These Muslim countries are leading the way in investment in education and R & D.<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, Muslim countries with vast economic resources and energy wealth are spending not nearly enough on education and R & D. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are spending only approximately 3.3% of their GDP on education which is less than the 4.4% world average.<sup>44</sup> For example, Saudi Arabia only spends 5.6% of its GDP on education.<sup>45</sup> This is not a reassuring statistic for GCC and Muslim countries.



36 Agung Suwandaru, Thamer Alghamdi and Nurwanto Nurwanto, *Empirical Analysis on Public Expenditure for Education and Economic Growth: Evidence from Indonesia*, 9 October 2021, MDPI Journal, pg. 10.

37 Suwandaru, 10.

38 Suwandaru, 6.

39 Suwandaru, 1.

40 Mehmet Mercan and Sevgi Sezer, *The Effect of Education Expenditure on Economic Growth: The Case of Turkey*, *Social and Behavioural Science* 109 (2014) 925-930, *Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences*, pg. 5.

41 "Turkey: Turkey to spend USD 60 billion on R&D by 2023" *TendersInfo News*, 24 October 2013, Gale One Files.

42 "Nigeria: Govt to Spend 0.5% of GDP on Tech, Innovation -Minister", 20 January 2022, allAfrica.com.

43 Mohammed Lazrak and Yahya Yechouti, *Issues in Moroccan Higher Education*, *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, 18 June 2017, pg. 86.

44 "Saudi Arabia spends 5.6% of GDP on education", 19 June 2013, Arab News, Gale OneFile.

45 "Saudi Arabia Spends 5.6% of GDP on education".



## Scientific Publications and Academic Contributions Must Increase



As a result of not investing in education and R & D, Muslim countries are not contributing significantly to scientific literature and publications. Sultan Ayoub Meo states Muslim countries with the highest GDP are not producing *research* and advancing scientific publications.<sup>46</sup> Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and UAE have the highest GDP in the region, but their research output is very low. The wealthy Arab states spend only 0.2% of their GDP on research and development, in contrast to the world average at 1.4%. Similarly, the OIC spends only 0.34% of their GDP on research and development, in contrast to the 2.3% global average in the same period.<sup>47</sup> This is remarkable considering the immense share of GDP these OIC and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries spend on urban structures, travel, tourism, leisure, and defence. Pakistan has spent a miserly 2.38% of its GDP on education in 2021.<sup>48</sup> The disparity between the wealth OIC and GCC countries possess and the miserly spending on R&D, education and research output is astonishing.

Ikram ul Haq and Muhammad Tanveer state that there were 3, 946, 933 publications in the year 2018 according to SCImago Journal and Country Rank (SJR).<sup>49</sup> There are 57 OIC countries which have produced 8.29% of the world total. Pakistan for example only represents 0.52% of global publications, whereas Iran represents 1.52% and Turkey represents 1.15% of the global average. There are 500 universities ranked among the highest, in which the OIC countries only have 14 universities.<sup>50</sup> Apart from some exceptions, these statistics represent a disparity in the Muslim world and the rest of the world in research and development, in scientific journal publications and contribution to knowledge.

Turkey and Iran have displayed better results compared to their neighbouring countries in research output. Turkey's publications have increased from "500 in 1998 to more than 6000 in 2003. Iran's publications have increased from 100 a decade ago to approximately 2000 now".<sup>51</sup> Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and Iran in recent years have increased their research output, and this is a positive sign. In 2022, Turkey produced 51,484, Iran produced 49,380, Saudi Arabia produced 45,324 and Egypt produced 28,879 research articles.<sup>52</sup>



46 Sultan Ayoub Meo, Abeer A. Al Masru, Adnan Mahmood Usmani, Almas Naeem Memon and Syed Ziauddin Zaidi, *Impact of GDP, Spending on R&D, Number of Universities and Scientific Journals on Research Publications among Asian Countries*, PLOS ONE, June 2013, Volume 8, Issue 6.

47 Sultan Ayoub Meo, pg. 5.

48 "Pakistan – Public spending on education as a share of GDP", World Atlas, Knoema.

49 Ikram ul Haq and Muhammad Tanveer, *Status of Research Productivity and Higher Education in the Members of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)*, University of Nebraska – Lincoln, January 2020, pg. 1.

50 Ikram ul Haq, 1.

51 Declan Butler, *The Date Gap: Statistics on Scientific Investment and Performance are lacking across the Muslim World*, Islam and Science News Feature, Vol 444, 2 November 2006, pg. 26-27.

52 "Statistical Yearbook on OIC Member Countries 2022", *Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC)*, (2023).



## The Way Forward

Majid Ursan al-Kilani outlines the way in which the Muslim community in the world can once again “exhibit strength and resilience” by learning from the success of the Golden era.<sup>53</sup> The Muslim community can bring about overall “positive change” by expanding the scope of “education” and by doing so will offset “fruitful change in other areas of life.”<sup>54</sup> Al-Kilani argues there were some cornerstones to past Muslim communities that allowed them to progress significantly. This included commitment to basic “Islamic principles”, genuine assessment of “reforms” and their results, awarding important roles to “wise, and enlightened individuals”, “avoiding classism and elitism”, and ensuring “sincere”, “able” and “skilled” individuals are “mobilised” towards positive causes.<sup>55</sup> These were the cornerstones of past Muslim communities, and by advancing these principles, the contemporary Muslim world can encourage a new era of educational, technological, and scientific progress.

The Muslim world was the centre of *enlightenment* and *knowledge* between the 7th and 12th century. The Islamic Golden Age represented the pinnacle of scientific research, technological innovation, philosophical advancement and civilisational progress. The contemporary world is advancing rapidly in science and technology. Whether it is the advent of artificial intelligence or blockchain technology, climate awareness or space exploration, the world is travelling at a rapid pace. The Muslim world must re-direct its energies toward research, development, education, institutions, and intellectual advancement. The Muslim world must symbolise commitment to *knowledge*, *discovery*, and *enlightenment*. This is the legacy of Muslim Civilisation, and it must be rekindled in this age.



53 Said Shabbar, *Ijtihad and Renewal*, (The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2017), pg. 130-131.

54 Said Shabbar, 130-131.

55 Said Shabbar, 130-131.



# Khul' and Compensation: Must a Woman Purchase her Freedom?

*Dr. Ghazala Qadri*





This article will discuss the female-initiated divorce right of *khul'* in Hanafi jurisprudence. In particular, it will seek to address a misunderstanding amongst many scholars that Hanafi jurisprudence only allows a *khul'* if a wife either returns her *mahr* (dower) to her husband or provides some form of compensation to him, in return for the divorce, irrespective of who is at fault in the marital breakdown. This article will seek to show the return of the *mahr* is not always considered a binding and conditional element of the *khul'*. Rather, the Hanafi jurists have taken a much more nuanced approach in respect of this matter and with regard to what, if anything at all, needs to be returned by the wife.

The subordinate status of women in Muslim countries has become the focal point of much academic writing in recent years.<sup>1</sup> The revival of Islamic norms throughout the Muslim world is often wrongly equated with increased oppression towards women, symbolised by the wearing of the veil and segregation of the sexes.<sup>2</sup> Combined with pre-existing patriarchal cultural and societal structures, the violation of women's rights has become the focus of governments, NGOs and women's rights activists in recent years.<sup>3</sup> The personal status laws of a particular state can also be symptomatic of women's low position in society<sup>4</sup>, particularly laws relating to divorce and polygamy.<sup>5</sup> The subordination of women within the domestic sphere can create a platform for their subjugation in other spheres of life: thus, advocating reform within these parameters has wider consequences for women in the economic, social and political arena.<sup>6</sup>

Within this context, the importance of female marital emancipation is acutely evident. An intellectual engagement with a secure right to divorce is extremely significant for women, as it can contribute to their overall empowerment.

Challenging existing hierarchies within families can become a springboard to secure greater rights within the public sphere.<sup>7</sup> A right to secure an exit from marriage is not merely an academic question, however, but an extremely pressing necessity for many Muslim women around the globe. The freedom to divorce can amount to freedom from violence, abuse and humiliation; an escape from authoritarian rule that can be life-threatening.



Within Islamic law, men have a unilateral right to divorce their wives, through the utterance of the word *talāq* (I divorce you), whilst a woman must seek redress through the courts if she wishes to initiate a divorce without the consent of her husband.<sup>8</sup> One such right is the *khul'* where a wife may ask her husband for a divorce.<sup>9</sup> Although all four schools of Sunni Islamic law recognise *khul'* as a female-initiated divorce right, this article will focus only on Hanafi jurisprudence as this has been used as the basis for limiting female divorce rights in the Indo-Pak subcontinent.<sup>10</sup> A common misconception exists in past and present scholarship that Hanafi jurisprudence only allows a *khul'* if a wife necessarily returns her *mahr* (dower) or provides some form of compensation to her husband in return for the divorce, irrespective of who is at fault in the marital breakdown.<sup>11</sup>

1 See Chitra Raghavan et al. *Self-Determination and Women's Rights In Muslim Societies*, (Brandeis Series on Gender, Culture, Religion and Law, 2012); Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Harvard University Press, 2013); Vrinda Narain, *Gender and Community; Muslim Women's Rights in India* (University of Toronto Press, 2001); Haideh Moghissi ed, *Women and Islam: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, (Routledge, 2005).

2 John Esposito with Natana DeLong-Bas, *Women in Muslim Family Law* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 105.

3 See Naz K. Modirazdeh, "Taking Islamic Law Seriously: NGOs and the Battle for Muslim Hearts and Minds," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 19 (2006): 191-192.

4 Essam Fawzy, "Muslim Personal Status Law in Egypt: The Current Situation and Possibilities of Reform Through Internal Initiatives", in *Women's Rights and Islamic Family Law: Perspectives on Reform*, ed. Lynn Welchmann (London: Zed Books, 2004), 27.

5 Esposito, *Women in Muslim Family Law* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 134.

6 See Bharathi Anandhi Venkatraman, "Islamic States and United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women: Are the Shari'a and the Convention Compatible?" *American University Law Review* 44 (1995): 1949, 1950-51.

7 Karin Carmit Yefet, "Lifting the Egyptian Veil: A Constitutional Road Map to Female Marital Emancipation in the Islamic World," *The Family in Law* 5, no. 87, (2011), 87.

8 Classical Hanafi jurisprudence specifically mentions only a limited number of grounds for a woman to seek a judicial divorce, assuming that she will seek a *khul'* in all other situations. See Esposito, *Women in Muslim Family Law*, 32-34.

9 Hisham M. Ramadan, *Understanding Islamic Law: From Classical to Contemporary*. (New York: Alta Mira Press, 2006), 120-121.

10 Lucy Carroll, "Qur'an 2:229: 'A Charter Granted to the Wife?' Judicial *khul'* in Pakistan," *Islamic Law and Society* 3, no. 1 (1996): 91-126.

11 Carroll, *A Charter Granted to the Wife?*.



Thus, the *khul'* has often been criticised as a process where a wife must ransom herself in order to gain release from the marital bond.<sup>12</sup> In societies where a woman has a weaker socioeconomic position than that of her male counterparts, this can create an onerous financial liability upon her. If the wife is unable to provide any financial recompense, this can leave her at the mercy of a cruel and malicious husband, who may or may not release her through a *talāq*, or may make her life so unbearable within the marriage that she is forced to seek a *khul'* at her own legal expense.

However, a closer look at the primary sources of Hanafī jurisprudence reveals that the return of the *mahr* is not always considered a binding and conditional element of the *khul'*. Instead, the Hanafī jurists have taken a much more refined approach regarding the return of any compensation. The central Qur'ānic verse that deals with the matter of the *khul'* is verse 2:229 where recompense in matters of divorce is mentioned twice in this verse.

“DIVORCE IS (REVOCABLE) TWO TIMES (ONLY). THEN EITHER RETAIN (THE WIFE) WITH HONOUR (IN MARITAL RELATIONSHIP) OR RELEASE HER WITH KINDNESS. AND IT IS NOT LAWFUL FOR YOU TO TAKE BACK ANYTHING OF THAT WHICH YOU HAVE GIVEN THEM, UNLESS BOTH FEAR THAT (NOW BY MAINTAINING MARITAL TIES) THEY MAY NOT BE ABLE TO OBSERVE THE LIMITS SET BY ALLAH. SO IF YOU FEAR THAT BOTH WILL BE UNABLE TO KEEP WITHIN ALLAH’S LIMITS, THEN (IN THAT CASE) THERE SHALL BE NO SIN UPON EITHER OF THEM IF THE WIFE (HERSELF) MAY GIVE UP SOMETHING AS RECOMPENSE TO FREE HERSELF (FROM THIS DISTRESSING BOND). THESE ARE THE LIMITS (SET) BY ALLAH. SO, DO NOT EXCEED THEM. AND THOSE WHO EXCEED THE LIMITS PRESCRIBED BY ALLAH, IT IS THEY WHO ARE THE WRONGDOERS”.<sup>13</sup>

In the beginning of this Qur'ānic verse, the addressee is the husband, and it has been made unlawful for him to take anything back from his wife that he had previously given to her. The exegetes have termed the ‘taking back’ of something in the beginning of the verse as referring to the return of the *mahr*.<sup>14</sup>

If, however, the spouses cannot maintain the marital ties, then the procedure for a wife to exit the marriage is given in the next part of the verse. This states that there is no sin if a wife *may* give some recompense to free herself from the marital bond, but the passage does not specify what that exact amount should be. The Qur'ān does not specify the nature of the recompense, nor does it place any minimum or maximum limit upon it. More importantly, the Qur'ānic verse does not state that the giving of some recompense by the wife is compulsory, but that there is no sin on her if she decides to give it and the husband accepts it.



In this verse, the Arabic word *junāh-un* is used to designate that the return of some recompense is permissible, but is not a mandatory order. Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri asserts that *junāh-un* (“there is no sin”) is used twenty-four times within the Qur'ān in various places, and each time it is used in the context of allowing an act, but never does it constitute a direct *hukm* or commandment.<sup>15</sup>

He argues, for example, that verse 2:198, states:

“AND IT IS NO SIN ON YOU IF YOU (ALSO) SEEK YOUR LORD’S BOUNTY (THROUGH TRADE DURING THE HAJJ DAYS)”.<sup>16</sup>

The word *junāh-un* is used to indicate that pilgrims may, if they wish, engage in trade during the hajj. This certainly does not mean that they *must* engage in such trade, merely that they are free to do so if they wish.<sup>17</sup>

12 Doreen Hinchcliffe, “Divorce in Pakistan: Judicial Reform”, *Journal of Islamic and Comparative Law*, 2 (1968a), 25; Taslima Monsoor, *From Patriarchy to Gender Equity. Family Law and its Impact on Women in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: University Press Ltd, 1999), 190.

13 Shaykh-ul-Islam, Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri. *The Glorious Quran*. Minhaj-ul-Quran Publications, 2011. 2:229.

14 Al-Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi' li-Abkām al-Qur'ān*, 582-583; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Azīm*, 1:273 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1980).

15 Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, *Islamic Principles of Family Law* (unpublished manuscript with the author). Qadri (1979) provides 24 verses of the Qur'ān where the word *junāh-un* has been used as pertaining to permissibility only 2:198, 2:229, 2:230, 2:233, 2:233, 2:234, 2:235, 2:236, 2:240, 2:282, 4:23, 4:24, 4:101, 4:102, 4:128, 5:93, 24:29, 24:58, 24:60, 24:61, 33:5, 33:51, 33:55, 33:60 33:10. Qadri states that there is only one *ayah* where *junāh-un* is used as mandatory, which relates to the *qasr* (shortened) prayer during travelling (4:101).

16 The Glorious Quran. 2:30.

17 Tahir-ul-Qadri, *Islamic Principles of Family Law*







Similarly, in verse 2:30, the Qur'ān states:

“...BUT IF HE (THE LATTER) ALSO DIVORCES HER, IN SUCH A CASE THERE SHALL BE NO SIN ON BOTH OF THEM (THE FORMER HUSBAND AND THE WIFE) IF THEY RETURN (ONCE MORE TO THE WEDLOCK)”.

Again, it is obvious from the context of the verse above that a divorced couple *may* remarry, but not that they *must* marry. Through the exegetical analogy of the Qur'ān with these and other verses highlighted, it cannot be said that there is a Qur'ānic injunction that states that a *khul'* can only be affected through the return of the *mahr*, as many believe. Instead, the Qur'ān is explicit in stating *junāh-un*: that there is no sin upon the wife, who *may* provide some recompense to release herself from the marital bond, but not that she *must* do so, or that any such recompense *must* constitute part of her *mahr*. This is in contrast to the prohibition upon the husband in asking for the return of the *mahr* in the earlier part of the verse. Here the words used are *hill-un*, meaning unlawful, and this is a direct commandment towards the husband rather than a discretionary act, as in the case of the wife.

Al-Tabarī endorses this view in his commentary on the Qur'ān and states that verse 2:229 does not mean that a wife must necessarily return the *mahr* if she requests a *khul'*.<sup>18</sup> He states this is only required if it is proved that the *nushūz* (disobedience) is on the part of the wife, and quotes various *sahāba*<sup>19</sup> and *tābi'īn*<sup>20</sup> to support his opinion<sup>21</sup>. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās mentions verse 2:229, and in his opinion, if the wife has misbehaved in the marriage, only then is it permissible for the husband to request some form of recompense to release her from the marriage.<sup>22</sup>



According to 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr, it is not lawful for a husband to receive any compensation unless it is proven that the *fasād* (conflict) appears to have come from the wife's side. 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr gives the example of a wife who claims that she cannot fulfil her husband's sexual rights. In this instance, it is permissible for the husband to receive something in lieu of the marital breakdown.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Jabr b. Zayd is of the opinion that if there is any *sharh* (mischief) on the part of the wife, then it is permissible for the husband to ask for the *mahr*, but he too emphasises that this is not a conditional element of the *khul'*.<sup>24</sup> In his explanation of verse 2:229, al-Rabī' states that if a wife behaves nicely towards her husband, he cannot force her to give him any compensation. Here it is clearly implied that a husband cannot force a wife to apply for a *khul'* in order to receive some recompense for the marital breakdown. Al-Rabī' goes on to state that if the husband has received anything from his wife (through such forceful separation), then whatever he has received from her is not lawful. Only if it is proven that the *nushūz* or *zulm* is from the wife's side is it permissible for the husband to get the recompense.<sup>25</sup> Al-Zuhrī is also of the opinion that a husband cannot force his wife to demand a *khul'* through coercion. He states that such an action is not *jā'iz* (permissible), and nor is the acceptance of any compensation in such an instance. A wife is only liable to compensate her husband in any manner if it is proven that she has acted in an inappropriate manner.<sup>26</sup>

18 Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarīr al-Tabarī, *Tafsīr al-Tabarī* (Cairo: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 2008), 557.

19 The title given to the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ).

20 The title given to the companions of the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ).

21 See also Ibn al-Qattān al-Fāsi, *al-Iqnā' fī Masā'il al-Ijmā'*, 93, who states that there is *ijmā'* on the fact that if the husband has committed *zulm* upon the wife, he has no right to request the return of any compensation.

22 Al-Tabarī, *Tafsīr al-Tabarī*, 557.

23 Al-Tabarī, *Tafsīr al-Tabarī*, 557.

24 Al-Tabarī, *Tafsīr al-Tabarī*, 558.

25 Al-Tabarī, *Tafsīr al-Tabarī*, 558.

26 Al-Tabarī, *Tafsīr al-Tabarī*, 559.

Al-Qurtubī also states that even though the Qur'ānic verses 4:19-20<sup>27</sup> were revealed to relate to a husband's right to a *talāq*, through exegetical analogy of the Qur'ānic verses, they also provide the basic principles to be followed when dealing with the matter of compensation in respect of the *khul'* and verse 2:229<sup>28</sup>. Verses 4:19-20 admonish husbands who wish to remarry but forcibly retain their wives in the hope that the wives may seek separation themselves and thus relinquish their *mahr*. Al-Qurtubī argues that these verses clearly state that a husband cannot cause harm to his wife in the hope that he will gain back from his wife what he had already given (namely the *mahr*). Thus, in the case of a *khul'*, if the *nushūz* or harm is from the husband, he has no right to ask for the return of the *mahr*.<sup>29</sup>

It is clear from the discussion above that the Qur'ān does not equate the return of some recompense as a prerequisite of the grant of the *khul'*; rather, any such compensation is something that is permissible, but not mandatory. Whilst the Qur'ān provides very few details regarding *khul'* and the mechanisms to be employed, precedents from the *Sunna* (practices of the Prophet ﷺ) are used to elaborate the matter further. The primary ahadith (sayings of the Prophet) on this subject describe the wife of Thābit b. Qays approaching the Prophet ﷺ and requesting a release from her marriage.<sup>30</sup> In Bukhārī's version of the hadith, the Prophet ﷺ asks Thābit's wife to return the garden given to her by her husband, but does not specify whether this was the *mahr*. Although al-Shaybānī states that the garden in this instance was the *mahr* that Thābit had given to his wife<sup>31</sup>, senior Hanafī jurists all adopt the view proffered by al-Tabarī and al-Qurtubī above.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the words of the hadith are also not specific regarding

exactly what the recompense should be and certainly do not mention that it must necessarily constitute a return of the *mahr*, as is commonly believed.



In the same vein, both al-Jassās and al-Marghīnānī adopt the same procedure as al-Qurtubī and use verse 4:20 of the Qur'ān to establish the basic principles governing the return of any compensation in the event of a divorce: namely that if the *nushūz* is from the husband, then his acceptance of compensation is *makrūh* (disapproved of).<sup>33</sup> Al-Jassās states that it is morally wrong for a husband to force his wife to speak out, particularly when the husband has no intention of keeping his wife but plans to make her life so intolerable that she must opt for a divorce.<sup>34</sup> In such an event, it is not permissible for the husband to receive any compensation for the wife.<sup>35</sup> Al-Jassās also considers it unlawful for a wife to wilfully give up a *mahr* if the *nushūz* is from the husband. He argues that even though a wife may give up her claim to her dower during the marriage, this will not be the case in respect to a *khul'*, as she will be wilfully causing herself harm, which is not only morally unacceptable but also goes against the other verses of the Qur'ān and the text of the hadith.<sup>36</sup>

27 Al-Qur'ān, 4:19. "O believers! It is not lawful for you to become heirs to women by force. And do not retain them by force in order to take (back) from them a portion of what you gave them, unless they commit open indecency. And treat them honourably. Then if you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing and Allah places in it abundant good" Al-Qur'ān, 4:20. "And if you seek to take a wife in place of another and you have (by now) given to her heaps of wealth, yet do not take back any part of it. Do you want to take that wealth (back) by means of unjust accusation and manifest sin?"

28 Al-Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi' li-Abkām al-Qur'ān*, 836.

29 Al-Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi' li-Abkām al-Qur'ān*, 497.

30 Muhammad b. Ismā'il al-Bukhārī, *al-Sahīh*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, vol. 7 (Dār al-Salām; 1997) Hadith 5273, 5274, 5275 (132-133); Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath al-Azdi as-Sijistānī *al-Sunan*, trans. Nasir al-Dīn al-Khattāb, vol. 3. (Maktaba Dār al-Salām, 2008) Hadith 2227, al-Nasā'ī, *al-Sunan*, trans. Nasir al-Dīn al-Khattāb, vol. 4 (Maktaba Dār al-Salām) Hadith 3491-3492.

31 Al-Shaybānī, *Kitāb al-Asl*, 549.

32 See al-Zayla'ī, *Tabyīn al-Haqā'iq*, vol. 7 (Cairo: al-Matba' al-Kubrā, 1912), 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Haskafī, *Durr al-Mukhtar fī sharh Tanwīr al-Absār*, in *Hāshia Radd al-Muhtār*, Ibn 'Ābidīn, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2005) 489.

33 Al-Marghīnānī, *Al-Hidāya*, 315; Al-Jassās al-Hanafī, *Abkām al-Qur'ān*, 392.

34 Al-Jassās al-Hanafī, *Abkām al-Qur'ān*, 392.

35 Al-Jassās al-Hanafī, *Abkām al-Qur'ān*, 393.

36 Al-Jassās refers to verse 4:20 and the text of the hadith provided in the *Sahīh* of al-Bukhārī. See al-Jassās al-Hanafī, *Abkām al-Qur'ān*, 394.



Al-'Aynī also alludes to verse 4:20, and categorically states that if the *nushūz* is from the husband, it is *makrūh* for him to receive any compensation from his wife, be it *qalīl* (a very small amount) or *kathīr* (a very large amount<sup>37</sup>). Al-'Aynī reasons that a wife is suffering double harm, analogous to what takes place in verses 4:19-20: the emotional torture of her husband's remarriage and then being penalised by having to provide recompense to her husband to release herself from such a marriage. The behaviour is described as *wahshat* – coercive – on the part of the husband. Thus, if a husband has received any compensation under these circumstances, then he is under a mandatory liability to return such recompense to his ex-wife<sup>38</sup>. Ibn 'Ābidīn goes further, and is of the opinion that those scholars who label the act of receiving unlawful compensation as *al-makrūh* or *al-makrūh al-tahrīmī* is in fact such a strong prohibition, “there should be no doubt about that fact”<sup>39</sup>.

Al-Sarakhsī states that if a husband is found to be at fault, then he forfeits his right to request the return of the *mahr*, terming it *al-makrūh al-tahrīmī*.<sup>40</sup> He too bases his view on verse 4:20. Interestingly, al-Sarakhsī posits the example of a husband who demands 1000 dirhams in return for declaring three *talāqs* to a wife. If, on such an occasion, a wife agrees to such a demand but her husband fails to pronounce the three *talāqs* and only gives one *talāq*, the wife will only be liable to pay 300 dirhams as compensation.<sup>41</sup> However, if the wife demands three *talāqs* with an offer of 1000 dirhams, a husband who only pronounces one *talāq* will not be able to recoup any amount of compensation due to his failure to comply with the agreement.<sup>42</sup> Here, preferential treatment is given to the wife in respect to the enforcement of the agreement between the spouses. Al-Sarakhsī goes on to say that if the amount in question is disputed, then the opinion of Abū Hanīfa is that the burden of proof lies with the husband to prove his claim. Since it is the wife who is required to pay, in the absence of any other witnesses the wife's view will be accepted over that of the husband.<sup>43</sup>



Both al-Kāsānī and al-Qudūrī also regard any *nushūz* on the part of the husband as a coercive tactic to force a *khul'* from the wife and thus label it not permissible.<sup>44</sup> Ibn al-Hammām goes even further than his Hanafī counterparts and states that if the *nushūz* is not on the part of the wife, then not only is it *harām* for a husband to receive any compensation from his wife, she cannot even voluntarily give up the *mahr* through mutual consent, as this would cause her *darar* (harm), which he finds unacceptable.<sup>45</sup> These views of the Hanafī jurists are extremely important, as they acknowledge the fact that a wife should not be financially penalised if her husband is to blame for the marital breakdown.

Whilst it has been shown that there is no liability upon the wife to return any compensation to her husband if he is responsible for the *nushūz*, if the wife is responsible for the *nushūz*, the *fuqahā'* are unanimous that she must provide some form of compensation to her husband upon her request of the *khul'*. This can be mutually agreed between the two spouses, or, in case of dispute, the matter can be referred to a *qādī* or the court. There is, however, some disagreement amongst the jurists as to whether a husband can demand more than the *mahr* as compensation for the *khul'*.

37 Al-'Aynī, *al-Bināya Sharh al-Hidāya*, 510. See also 'Abd al-Hayy Lukhnawī, *Sharh al-Wiqāya ma' Hāshiyā 'Umda al-Ri'āya*, vol. 3 (Al-Bāz al-Makkah, 2009), 392.

38 Al-'Aynī, *al-Bināya Sharh al-Hidāya*, 510.

39 Ibn 'Ābidīn *Radd al-Muhtār 'alā Durr al-Mukhtār*, 489.

40 Al-Sarakhsī, *Kitāb al-Mabsūt*, 215.

41 Al-Sarakhsī, *Kitāb al-Mabsūt*, 213.

42 Al-Sarakhsī, *Kitāb al-Mabsūt*, 214.

43 Al-Sarakhsī, *Kitāb al-Mabsūt*, 214.

44 Al-Kāsānī, *Badā'i' al-Sanā'i'*, 329; Al-Qudūrī, *Mukhtasar al-Qudūrī fī Fiqh Hanafī*, in *al-Lubāb fī Sharh al-Kitāb*, 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Dimashqī al-Maydānī al-Hanafī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 2004), Part 2, 188.

45 Ibn al-Hammām al-Hanafī, *Fath al-Qadīr sharh al-Hidāya*, 194.

In his discussion of the *khul'*, the version proffered by al-Shaybānī relates to the situation where Thābit's wife is willing to return more than the garden but is refused by the Prophet ﷺ. Al-Shaybānī notes that the Prophet ﷺ disliked the return of more than the *mahr* as compensation for the *khul'* and did not find this morally acceptable.<sup>46</sup> Al-Shaybānī, however, argues that this reading is only acceptable if it is proven that a wife has been *nushūz*: disobedient to her husband. In this instance, *tāba al-fadl li'l-zawj*: "the husband may enjoy the excess".<sup>47</sup>



The rationale behind this viewpoint is that the *nikāh* is viewed as a contractual agreement between the husband and wife. When entering the agreement, just as a wife can request any amount of *mahr* from her husband as compensation for entering into the marital contract, even if it is more than *mahr al-mithl*<sup>48</sup>, so, when she is breaking the marital covenant as a result of her own wrongdoing, she can offer more compensation to her husband in return for this breach. This is considered her own free choice in agreeing to give more than the *mahr*. In the case of a dispute, she is entitled to refer the case to the court. Al-Shaybānī also qualifies his statement by stating that if it is found that the husband is *nushūz* and initiates the argument, then he is not entitled to demand more than the *mahr*.<sup>49</sup>

However, in his commentary on the *Hidāya*, Al-'Aynī states that al-Marghīnānī rejected al-Shaybānī's opinion, stating that this is not "part of our (Hanafī) view".<sup>50</sup> Even if it is proven that a wife is *nushūz*, taking more than the original *mahr* as compensation is disapproved of, and he quotes the Prophet's refusal of Thābit's wife's offer to provide more than the garden. Al-Jassās offers his view from the opinions of Abū Hanīfa, Zufar and Abū Yūsuf, who clearly state that if the dispute comes from the wife's side, then it is only permissible for a husband to request what he had given to her (as the *mahr*) and nothing more.<sup>51</sup> Al-Jassās, al-Kāsānī, al-Qudūrī and Ibn al-Hammām also regard the return of more than the *mahr*, in any circumstance, to be morally reprehensible, and legally term it *al-makrūh* (abhorrent).<sup>52</sup> Although al-Kāsānī accepts that a wife can voluntarily offer more if she so wishes, he believes that this has the potential to cause the wife harm, and is thus an objectionable act.<sup>53</sup> Ibn al-Hammām quotes a student of 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās, 'Atā', who reports that the Prophet ﷺ himself states that a husband cannot receive more than the sum that he originally gave to his wife.<sup>54</sup>

In conclusion, this article has sought to show that providing financial compensation is not a compulsory element of the *khul'*, but is dependent upon who is at fault within the marital breakdown. If the wife is proven to be at fault, then the husband has the right to receive some recompense from his wife, but this must not be more than any *mahr* that he has given to her upon the contract of the marriage. However, if the fault lies with the husband or if he has coerced his wife to seek a *khul'* through misbehaviour, then the wife is not liable to repay any compensation to her husband in return for the divorce. In the case of disputes regarding any of these issues, both the husband and the wife have the right to go to a court and have the matter resolved according to the principles highlighted above.

46 Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Shaybānī, *al-Jāmi' al-Saghir*, 216.

47 Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Shaybānī, *al-Jāmi' al-Saghir*, 216.

48 A *mahr al-mithl* refers to the dowry which is given to the women who are related to the wife's father: for example, his aunts, sisters and cousins on the uncle's side. To give a proper dowry to a female, her age, knowledge, intellect and character will be taken into consideration, as well as the lineage and property of her husband. See Al-Kāsānī, *Badā'i' al-Sanā'i'*, 2:287.

49 Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Shaybānī, *al-Jāmi' al-Saghir*, 216.

50 Al-'Aynī, *al-Bināya sharh al-Hidāya*, 301.

51 Al-Qudūrī, *al-Mukhtasar*, 392.

52 Al-Qudūrī, *al-Mukhtasar*, 188; al-Kāsānī, *Badā'i' al-Sanā'i'*, 329; Ibn al-Hammām al-Hanafī, *Fath al-Qadīr sharh al-Hidāya*, 194. See also 'Allāma Abd-ul-Hayy Lakhnawī, *Sharh al-Wiqāya ma' Hāshiyah 'Umda 'al-Ri'āya*, vol. 3 (Al-Bāz al-Makkah, 2009), 392, Al-Jassās, *Abkām-ul-Qur'an*, 394

53 Al-Kāsānī, *Badā'i' al-Sanā'i'*, 328.

54 Ibn al-Hammām al-Hanafī, *Fath al-Qadīr sharh al-Hidāya*, 194. This hadith is reported by al-Dāraqutnī and al-Bayhaqī. See also Ibn al-Qattān al-Fāsī, *al-Iqnā' fi Masā'il al-Ijmā'*, 92, who states that there is *ijmā'* on the fact that a husband can request an equal or lesser amount of the dowry as compensation, but not more than he has given.



# Finding and Being Your True Self: Identity Loss in the Era of Social Media

*Safyah Akhtar Malik*

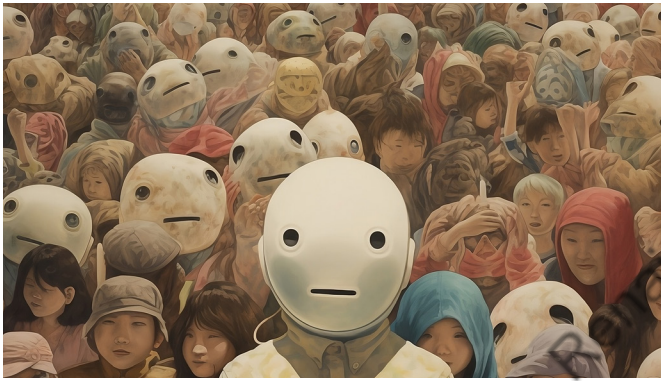




Social media can be a blessing or a curse. It has led to loss of identity for many, constant bombardment of images and posts depicting a perfect, non-achievable life, and one-click access of flaw-fighting filters, used like second nature, on photos taken daily, can lead one to feel inadequate, anxious, and depressed, as well as developing a distorted sense of self. This article explores themes of how social media can cause the loss of one's true identity; it will discuss the potential for adverse effects on a user including dysmorphia, cyberbullying, and the rising concern of psychological and physiological changes that can impact the Muslim identity.

**Identity:** the condition or fact of being a specific person or thing; individuality.<sup>1</sup>

**Loss:** the fact of no longer having something or having less of it than before.<sup>2</sup>



If we are to talk about losing one's identity, then we must address the concept of possessing an identity first. As a Muslim, one's core identity is believing in, and trusting one God, Allah, and believing in His Prophet, Muhammad ﷺ. The high-level purpose and identity of a Muslim is to earn God's happiness, work to live and embody prophetic values of peace, knowledge, and philanthropy in one's personal life.

'SO REMEMBER ME, I SHALL REMEMBER YOU'<sup>3</sup>

Having a duty of being God's representative on this earth, one must remember their higher purpose, to worship and remember Allah daily, help the less fortunate, and be grateful for His blessings on the good days, as well as the bad.

## Advancement of Technology as a Favour of Allah

'AND IF YOU WANT TO COUNT THE FAVOURS OF ALLAH, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO NUMBER THEM ALL. SURELY, ALLAH IS MOST FORGIVING, EVER-MERCIFUL.'<sup>4</sup>

The technology of today is nothing short of phenomenal. We have seen the development of devices like smartphones, tablets, and laptops to a degree that one has access to everything in terms of knowledge, news, or answers at the palm of one's hands. A Muslim will attribute this as one of the many blessings and favours of God, and one would strive to remember this while making use of it.

Information can be accessed from around the world, one can shop and pay for goods and services without ever having to leave home. Devices are becoming increasingly powerful and sophisticated, with features that were once only available on a desktop computer now being available on something that fits in a pocket.



Phone | Tracy Le-blanc

1 "Identity Definition and Meaning." Collins English Dictionary.

2 "Loss Definition and Meaning." Collins English Dictionary.

3 "Holy Quran Surah Al-Baqarah with English Translation." Irfan-ul-Quran, Ch 2, Verse 152.

4 "Holy Quran Surah An-Nahl with English Translation." Irfan-ul-Quran, Ch 16, Verse 18.



Greater affordability means every kind of person, regardless of age, gender, education, nationality, ethnicity, or religion has access to knowledge, news and information at their fingertips. Even with access to various resources, there exists a gap in self-understanding. This issue remains across all disciplines of knowledge and learning, even the circles of learned Muslim scholars as mentioned by Mawlana Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī رَجْمَةُ اللَّهِ:

*‘In this same way, the great scholars of the age split hairs on details of all matters. They know perfectly and completely those sciences that do not concern the Soul. But as for what is truly of importance and touches us more closely than any- thing else, namely our own Self, this your great scholars do not know. They make statements about everything, saying, “This is true and that is not true. This is right and that is wrong.” Yet, they do not know their own Self, whether it is true or false, pure or impure.’<sup>5</sup>*

Advancement of this technology has led to new social media platforms being created, and features within them, that have completely changed the way one communicates and interacts with others.

In the context of the modern day, and in light of what it means to possess a Muslim identity, we need to identify the dangers, challenges and risks of losing one’s identity. A modern-day adage often quoted eloquently puts this challenge forward:

‘AIM TO LIVE IN THIS WORLD WITHOUT ALLOWING THE WORLD TO LIVE INSIDE YOU, BECAUSE WHEN A BOAT SITS ON WATER IT SAILS PERFECTLY, BUT WHEN WATER ENTERS INSIDE THE BOAT, IT SINKS.’

The upsurge of social media usage has led to the birth of psychological disorders affecting users both in their outward, *zaahir*<sup>6</sup>, and inward, *baatin*<sup>7</sup>, states. A study saw users seeking status and popularity online, or those that utilise social media for comparison in relating their life to others, tend to experience negative psychological outcomes.<sup>8</sup>

## Social Media Dismorphia

Snapchat dismorphia, Instagram dismorphia and TikTok brain are some up-and-coming phrases used widely in context to this subject. Snapchat and Instagram dismorphia are underpinned by the social media apps and characterised by the need for app users to heavily change one’s online image, and how one presents themselves to the outward world, often using filters and editing tools that are easily accessible in the app. This leads to a contorted view of reality, dissatisfaction with one’s own looks and appearance, and a disconnect to the outward image of the person.

Although Social media dismorphia is not formally classified as a psychological disorder, it can amplify and lead to body dismorphic disorder, which is ‘a mental health condition where a person spends a lot of time worrying about flaws in their appearance. These flaws are often unnoticeable to others.’<sup>9</sup>



Mirror Picture | Anastasia Shuraeva

<sup>5</sup> Rūmī, Jalāl al-Dīn (ra), and A. J. Arberry. *Discourses of Rumi: Fihi Ma Fihi*. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2019, Page 32.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Meaning of zaahir’ (Arabic term for outward state), Rekhta Dictionary.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Meaning of baatin’ (Arabic term for inward state), Rekhta Dictionary.

<sup>8</sup> Sherlock, M., & Wagstaff, D. L., *Psychology of Popular Media*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2019; Cohen, R., et al., *Body Image*, Vol. 23, 2017

<sup>9</sup> ‘Body Dismorphia’ NHS.

If we turn attention to one's inner state, the *baatin*<sup>10</sup>, there can also be significant implications. 'TikTok brain' is another term being used in the social media world, often used to describe physiological changes that can occur in one's brain due to excessive time spent on TikTok. TikTok delivers short-form video content that is well-known for its addictive nature. The changes in a user can include attention deficit, difficulty concentrating, and a decreased ability to think critically.<sup>11</sup>



One should also be mindful that social media fans the flame of cyberbullying, and can lead to a detrimental outcome. A study found that there is an increased number of suicides due to cyberbullying<sup>12</sup> so the impact can be deadly.

241,791 young people in the UK were referred to the National Health Service for mental health help in the first three months of 2022 – half the total number of people referred in 2021.<sup>13</sup> The alarming increase in mental health issues and suicide within younger demographics can be attributed to after-effects of daily social media use.<sup>14</sup>

'SO DID YOU THINK THAT WE HAD CREATED YOU IN VAIN (WITHOUT ANY PURPOSE) AND THAT YOU WOULD NOT RETURN TO US?'<sup>15</sup>

## Impact on Muslim Identity

Muslims are encouraged to gain knowledge, think critically, and develop oneself intellectually. One is encouraged by Allah Almighty and the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ to utilise their time to the fullest potential possible. Self-growth is encouraged by the Prophet ﷺ through the concept of *Islah* (betterment) of oneself. Nawwas bin Sam'an Al-Kilabi said:

*"I heard the Messenger of Allah say: 'There is no heart that is not between two of the Fingers of the Most Merciful. If He wills, He guides it and if He wills, He sends it astray.' The Messenger of Allah used to say: 'O You Who makes hearts steadfast make our hearts steadfast in adhering to Your religion.' And he said: 'The Scale is in the Hand of the Most Merciful; He will cause some peoples to rise and others to fall until the day of Resurrection.'"*<sup>16</sup>



10'Meaning of baatin' (Arabic term for inward state), Rekhta Dictionary.

11 Wilmer HH, Chein JM. Mobile technology habits: patterns of association among device usage, intertemporal preference, impulse control, and reward sensitivity. *Psychon Bull Rev.* 2016; 23(5):1607-1614.

12 Bailin A, Milanaik R, Adesman A. Health implications of new age technologies for adolescents: A review of the research. *Curr Opin Pediatr.* 2014;26:605-19

13 Children & Young People Now, "Campaigners warn of 'alarming' rise in teenage suicides," September 14, 2022.

14 Meaker, Morgan. "How A British Teen's Death Changed Social Media." WIRED UK, October 5, 2022.

15 "Holy Quran Surah Al-Mu-minun with English Translation." Irfan-ul-Quran, Ch 23, Verse 115.

16 Sunan Ibn Majah, 199



In order to implement the Prophetic concept of *Islah*, one must seek knowledge, work on truly understanding one's religion, and ensure one is safeguarding one's *Iman* (faith) at all times. One must consider one's *Iman* akin to a precious jewel, requiring a safeguarding protocol, to ensure it remains unaffected by any outer source.

Today's environment requires a layer of protection for the high-value jewel that is one's *Iman*. One should not focus solely on outward appearance, but work on improving the whole self, through outward and inward cleanliness of character.

Social media dysmorphia and the 'Tiktok brain' phenomena has potential to be in direct conflict with a young practising Muslim. It can present concerns of a negative impact, not only on one's mental health, but one's ability to truly practise and implement Islam authentically. If one finds themselves drawn into the online minefield of comparing appearance, counting likes, striving to achieve the unachievable, expecting instant reward, and getting results quickly, how would one find time to make a connection with Allah, and his Prophet ﷺ? How would one remain patient and steadfast on the life-long path of becoming a better, well-rounded, developed and practising Muslim? And how can one truly find oneself?



Selfie | Cottonbro Studio



Medical Equipment | Cedric Fauntleroy

Unattainable beauty standards, uprising of influencer culture and a new brand of Muslim public figures with large followings, have made it difficult for younger Muslims to be able to decipher what is a part of the Islamic faith, and what isn't, where guidance related to one's faith should be taken from, and where it shouldn't be taken from. There is a visible incline of young Muslims heavily affected by these blurring of the lines.

The unattainable beauty standards trend is explained by facial plastic surgeon, and former president of the American Academy for Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, William H. Truswell, M.D. He said, "We're seeing more patients than ever before who are under thirty and want to start young with minor tweaks in order to forestall the need for larger procedures later"<sup>17</sup>

There's no question that social media is integral to daily life, and it is naive to think one can live in today's world with zero form of contact to it whatsoever. A study found that 95% of teenagers use some form of social media.<sup>18</sup> One may use it to stay connected with friends and family, to learn about the world, and to express oneself, but it is essential for one to understand what social media is, and more importantly, what it isn't.

In the context of being a young Muslim, if one sees a person that looks like them with a large following, one must remember that this person is representing themselves only, and must separate the actions of the person from the commandments of Allah and the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ.

17 "Social Media Creating Unrealistic Expectations" American Spa.

18 Pew Research Center, 2022, "Teens, Social Media and Technology 2022", Survey conducted April 14-May 4, 2022

### *Live in the social media world; Don't let it live within you*

The keystone to understanding how social media can enhance, and not negatively impact one's life, is for one to seek answers to the following questions<sup>19</sup>.

#### *How do I make beneficial use of it?*

Utilising social media to make one a better version of oneself should be high on one's list of priorities. Developing oneself personally and professionally, networking, enhancing creativity, and learning about the community and world, sharing beneficial knowledge to others are all examples of beneficial use. Studies find that social media is associated with increase in creativity and innovation hence it could be a great tool for self-growth in individuals, if used optimally.<sup>20</sup>

#### *What should I understand about it?*

It's crucial to realise the power of social media. Social media is associated with shorter attention spans and higher chances of developing anxiety and depression<sup>21</sup>. It is known to be linked with lower levels of empathy in an individual and higher rates of narcissism.<sup>22</sup>

Studies indicate that one's impact will vary subject to different factors -including daily usage time, type of social media being used, age of the user, and one's personality and individual cognitive style. It's vital that one is truly mindful about how their social media usage will have the potential for a loss of their true identity.

#### *How can I remain in control of my usage?*

A research centre found that since their 2014-15 survey, their recent survey conducted in 2022<sup>23</sup> showed TikTok usage has arisen; Facebook has dropped; but Instagram and Snapchat have grown.

It's vital for young Muslims to categorise social media platforms and their usage for each, into useful and not-so-useful categories. One can align each platform in the context of one's personal identity and values. Weighing implications of one's intellectual development, mental health, and generally what is the best use of one's time. Regular inspections of whether one's identity as a person is being affected by using social media ensures one remains in control in the longer term.

It's easy to get distracted in the social media world - one must bring it back to basics when it comes to what is the purpose of one's life, and what is one's true identity.

The first step to finding oneself is to understand oneself. Ask yourself - does the online activity one is engaged in, help, or hinder oneself, in terms of having an authentic identity as a Muslim? Is it being used as a vessel for gaining impactful, useful content, potentially drawing one closer to one's faith? Or is it becoming a hindrance, and the reason for losing one's true identity over time?



Using Phone | Michael Burrows

19 Quintana, Daniel S., Lara McKinley, Shane R. Jimerson, and Kelly-Ann Allen. *Academics Guide to Social Media: Learn, Engage and Belong*. Routledge, 2022.

20 Batool, S., and A. Rehman. 2017. "Impact of social media on creativity and innovation." *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly* 8(2): 1-12.

21 Primack, A. B., P. M. Greenfield, M. Michikyan, and L. Whang. 2015. "Association between problematic social media use and symptoms of depression and anxiety in college students." *Depression and Anxiety* 32(10): 773-781.

22 Turel, O., and A. Qayyum. 2017. "Social media addiction and narcissism: A moderated mediation model of self-esteem and self-efficacy." *Personality and Individual Differences*, 110: 111-115.

23 T. Sharot, C. R. Sunstein, How people decide what they want to know. *Nat. Hum. Behav.* 4, 14–19 (2020).



# Unlocking the Fountain of Youth: The Science of Healthspan and Strength Training as a Muslim

*Dr. Wassim Drissi*





*The following is for educational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. Please refer to your healthcare provider before undertaking any new activity.*

In the health and fitness world, we've all heard the mantra, "Exercise is medicine." The wisdom and truth in these words cannot be overstated. Perhaps what needs clarity is the precise types of exercises that yield the most profound "medicine." Here we will delve into the realm of resistance training and its integral role in promoting healthspan, or the practice of not just adding years to your life, but life to your years.

## Healthspan and Longevity: The Islamic Perspective

The pursuit of a healthful lifespan finds its roots deeply entwined with the core values of Islam. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ shared profound wisdom, "Take advantage of five before five: your youth before your old age, your health before your illness, your wealth before your poverty, your free time before your work, and your life before your death"<sup>1</sup>. Our time in this world is fleeting, and the vitality we sustain throughout this time is a divine blessing meant to be preserved.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ also taught us that "Actions are but by intention, and each person will have but that which he intended". Every moment of our life can be a form of worship, including our training time. Intention in Islam (*al-niyyah*) is a powerful concept, and it can transform our everyday actions into acts of worship. Thus, when we train our bodies, we can make our intention to maintain the health and strength Allah has blessed us with so that we can better serve Him and His creation. In this way, our time spent in exercise is not merely for our worldly benefit, but it becomes a spiritual investment, an act of gratitude and obedience to Allah.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾

(ADH-DHARIYAT 51:56)

As stated in the Quran, "And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me".<sup>2</sup> To fulfil this sacred purpose, we are called to maintain a state of good health, necessitating meticulous care of our bodies and minds. As we will learn, a crucial component of this care is resistance training.



## The Natural Course of Aging

As we walk the path of life, our bodies undergo a natural yet relentless process of ageing. This process manifests as a progressive degeneration of our neuromuscular system, leading to a decline in muscle strength, known as dynapenia, and a loss of muscle mass, called sarcopenia. These changes can significantly impact our physical performance, overshadowing the joy and freedom of our years of retirement.<sup>3</sup> From as early as 30 years old, an individual not participating in resistance training can begin to lose about 0.2kg (0.44lbs) of muscle a year.<sup>4</sup> This rate doubles as individuals approach their 50s and 60s to where they may be losing 0.4kg, or almost a pound of muscle a year.<sup>5</sup>

1 Deschenes, MR. «Effects of Aging on Muscle Fibre Type and Size.» *Sports Med Auckl NZ* 34, no. 12 (2004): 809-824.

2 Qur'an, 51:56.

3 Roubenoff, R. «Sarcopenia: A Major Modifiable Cause of Frailty in the Elderly.» *J Nutr Health Aging* 4, no. 3 (2000): 140-142.; Westcott, WL. «Resistance Training is Medicine: Effects of Strength Training on Health.» *Curr Sports Med Rep* 11, no. 4 (2012): 209-216.

4 Forbes, GB, and Halloran, E. «The Adult Decline in Lean Body Mass.» *Hum Biol* 48, no. 1 (1976): 161-173.

5 Forbes and Halloran, 161-173, Frontera, WR, et al. «Aging of Skeletal Muscle: A 12-Yr Longitudinal Study.» *J Appl Physiol Bethesda Md* 1985 88, no. 4 (2000).



To make matters worse, this happens on top of anabolic resistance, or the decrease in our bodies ability to use protein for muscle growth and repair, which naturally occurs as we age.<sup>6</sup> This combination leaves many individuals significantly under-muscled in advanced age, resulting in their inability to hold their grandchild, catch themselves from falling, or even get up from a chair.<sup>7</sup> The cycle of ageing often initiates a worrisome pattern: the loss of muscle results in a reduction of metabolic rate, or the rate at which the body consumes energy.<sup>8</sup> This slowed metabolism can then predispose to fat accumulation. Unfortunately, this loss of metabolism places approximately 80% of men and 70% of women aged 60 and above into the less desirable categories of being overweight or obese.<sup>9</sup> Attempting to diet through a reduced metabolic rate due to muscle loss can lead to frustration at best. The culmination of these changes can significantly impact the quality of life, leading to a decline in physical performance and independence. **However, a beacon of hope exists.** A growing body of scientific evidence suggests that we can mitigate the effects of ageing and enhance our healthspan through the consistent practice of resistance training.



Training Equipment | Karolina Grabowska

## Muscle's Multifaceted Roles

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ  
أَسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ

(AL-A'RAF 7:11)

AND CERTAINLY, WE DID CREATE YOU, THEN GAVE YOU SHAPE (I.E., ACCOMPLISHED THE PHASES OF CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL GENESIS AND EVOLUTION OF LIFE TILL THE COMPLETION OF THE PHYSICAL EXISTENCE OF ADAM).<sup>10</sup>

### 1: The Foundation of Strength, Stability, and Resilience

Muscles contribute significantly to our overall strength, stability, resilience, and power, ultimately serving as the foundation of our physical health. One of the key benefits of maintaining muscle strength is the role it plays in preserving independence as we age.<sup>11</sup> Resistance training, through the process of building and maintaining muscle mass, is a powerful deterrent to conditions like osteoporosis or weakening of the bones. Osteoporosis, which is a common concern with ageing, is shown to be considerably reduced in individuals who regularly engage in resistance training.<sup>12</sup>

Muscle strength, especially grip strength, has been inversely correlated with all-cause-mortality in several studies.<sup>13</sup> This means that higher grip strength is associated with a lower risk of dying for many reasons, as it typically indicates better overall muscular health. It's not just about the size or the appearance of our muscles, but the power they confer on our independence and longevity by allowing us to control ourselves through space.

6 Forbes and Halloran, 161-173.

7 Beaudart, C, et al. «Health Outcomes of Sarcopenia: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.» PloS One 12, no. 1 (2017)., Guan, Y, and Yan, Z. «Molecular Mechanisms of Exercise and Healthspan.» Cells 11, no. 5 (2022): 872.

8 Forbes and Halloran, «The Adult Decline», 161-173; Dos Santos, L, et al. «Sarcopenia and Physical Independence in Older Adults: The Independent and Synergic Role of Muscle Mass and Muscle Function.» J Cachexia Sarcopenia Muscle 8, no. 2 (2017): 245-250.

9 Forbes and Halloran, 161-173.

10 Qur'an, 7:11.

11 Forbes and Halloran, 161-173, Fyfe, JJ, Hamilton, DL, and Daly, RM. «Minimal-Dose Resistance Training for Improving Muscle Mass, Strength, and Function: A Narrative Review of Current Evidence and Practical Considerations.» Sports Med Auckl NZ 52, no. 3 (2022): 463-479., Hong, AR, and Kim, SW. «Effects of Resistance Exercise on Bone Health.» Endocrinol Metab 33, no. 4 (2018): 435-444.

12 Roubenoff, R, 140-142, Forbes and Halloran, 161-173, Wang, Y, et al. «Association of Handgrip Strength with All-Cause Mortality: A Nationally Longitudinal Cohort Study in China.» J Sci Med Sport 25, no. 11 (2022): 878-883.

13 Beaudart, C, et al. 2017, López-Bueno, R, et al. «Thresholds of Handgrip Strength for All-Cause, Cancer, and Cardiovascular Mortality: A Systematic Review with Dose-Response Meta-Analysis.» Ageing Res Rev 82 (2022): 101778., Iizuka, K, Machida, T, and Hirafuji, M. «Skeletal Muscle is an Endocrine Organ.» J Pharmacol Sci 125, no. 2 (2014): 125-131.





## 2: The Metabolic Engine

Our muscles play a vital role in energy metabolism.<sup>14</sup> They are densely packed with mitochondria, the “powerhouses” of our cells. The mitochondria’s function is to generate energy for our body’s metabolic processes. By engaging in resistance training, we increase the mitochondrial density in our muscles, leading to more efficient energy production and utilisation.

Muscles are key in managing blood glucose levels.<sup>15</sup> When muscles flex, or contract, they act like glucose sponges, soaking up more sugar from the bloodstream to fuel the hungry muscle cells, independent of insulin! They contain a channel protein called GLUT4, which is important in pulling out glucose from the bloodstream into the muscle cells. Regular resistance training increases the concentration and activity of GLUT4 and increases insulin sensitivity, leading to better long-term blood sugar management.

A bout of resistance training can increase your basal metabolic rate (BMR) for up to three days following the session, which means burning more calories even when at rest.<sup>16</sup> By lifting 3 times a week, you can increase your daily BMR by an average of 100 calories, including on the days you rest! As you train and increase muscle mass, the energy-hungry muscles can increase your BMR on a more long-term basis. In fact, 1kg of added muscle will increase your BMR by 20 calories.

## 3: The Secretive Endocrine Organ

Remarkably, our muscles behave like an endocrine organ, similar to our pancreas or thyroid.<sup>17</sup> They produce and secrete a myriad of molecules called myokines. Myokines have a significant impact on

energy metabolism, cell growth, and regeneration, they play a crucial role in combating systemic inflammation.

Various myokines are produced in response to muscle contractions during resistance training. These include myostatin, which inhibits muscle growth and differentiation; follistatin and activin, both involved in muscle growth and repair; and irisin, dubbed the ‘exercise hormone,’ which stimulates the browning of white fat tissue, improves metabolic health, and can preserve cognitive function.<sup>18</sup> Interleukins like IL-6 and IL-15 also act as myokines and have various roles, such as promoting muscle growth and mitigating inflammation.<sup>19</sup>

## 4: The Antioxidant Factory

Our muscles play a vital role in combating oxidative stress.<sup>20</sup> When we exercise, our muscles experience a physiologic increase in oxidative stress. This triggers pathways that increase enzymatic responses to counteract oxidative damage. One such antioxidant is the extracellular superoxide dismutase (EcSOD).

EcSOD is expressed in skeletal muscle, and its expression can be upregulated by exercise.<sup>21</sup> This powerful antioxidant travels through circulation and accumulates primarily in the heart and lungs, exerting its protective antioxidant effects. The antioxidant effect of EcSOD occurs differently than that of oral antioxidant supplements like fish oil, given that it’s produced within the body and specifically responds to the oxidative stress of exercise. Maintaining a regular regimen of resistance training can therefore significantly boost our body’s antioxidant capacity, shielding us from damaging oxidative stress, and promoting overall health for the long term.

14 Forbes and Halloran, 161-173, Mori, K. «Maintenance of Skeletal Muscle to Counteract Sarcopenia in Patients with Advanced Chronic Kidney Disease and Especially Those Undergoing Hemodialysis.» *Nutrients* 13, no. 5 (2021): 1538., Groennebaek, T, and Vissing, K. «Impact of Resistance Training on Skeletal Muscle Mitochondrial Biogenesis, Content, and Function.» *Front Physiol* 8 (2017): 713., Mang, ZA, et al. «Aerobic Adaptations to Resistance Training: The Role of Time under Tension.» *Int J Sports Med* 43, no. 10 (2022): 829-839., Pratley, R, et al. «Strength Training Increases Resting Metabolic Rate and Norepinephrine Levels in Healthy 50- to 65-Yr-Old Men.» *J Appl Physiol Bethesda Md* 1985 76, no. 1 (1994): 133-137., Hunter, GR, et al. «Resistance Training Increases Total Energy Expenditure and Free-Living Physical Activity in Older Adults.» *J Appl Physiol Bethesda Md* 1985 89, no. 3 (2000): 977-984., J, M, T S, Jc M, and Sm P. «Resistance Exercise, Aging, Disuse, and Muscle Protein Metabolism.» *Compr Physiol* 11, no. 3 (2021).

15 Forbes and Halloran, 161-173, Holtén, MK, Zacho, M, Gaster, M, Juel, C, Wojtaszewski, JFP, and Dela, F. «Strength Training Increases Insulin-Mediated Glucose Uptake, GLUT4 Content, and Insulin Signaling in Skeletal Muscle in Patients with Type 2 Diabetes.» *Diabetes* 53, no. 2 (2004): 294-305., Flores-Opazo, M, McGee, SL, and Hargreaves, M. «Exercise and GLUT4.» *Exerc Sport Sci Rev* 48, no. 3 (2020): 110-118., Taaffe, DR, Pruitt, L, Reim, J, Butterfield, G, and Marcus, R. «Effect of Sustained Resistance Training on Basal Metabolic Rate in Older Women.» *J Am Geriatr Soc* 43, no. 5 (1995): 465-471

16 Forbes and Halloran, 161-173, Hunter, GR, et al., 2000., Park, J, Kim, J, and Mikami, T. «Exercise Hormone Irisin Prevents Physical Inactivity-Induced Cognitive Decline in Mice.» *Behav Brain Res* 433 (2022): 114008.

17 Forbes and Halloran, 161-173., Mori, K., 2021.

18 Mori, K., 2021, Aladag, T, Mogulkoc, R, and Baltaci, AK. «Irisin and Energy Metabolism and the Role of Irisin on Metabolic Syndrome.» *Mini Rev Med Chem*. Published online April 11, 2023., Calle, MC, and Fernandez, ML. «Effects of Resistance Training on the Inflammatory Response.» *Nutr Res Pract* 4, no. 4 (2010): 259-269.

19 Mori, K., 2021.

20 Forbes and Halloran, 161-173., Mori, K., 2021., Cotman, CW, and Berchtold, NC. «Exercise Builds Brain Health: Key Roles of Growth Factor Cascades and Inflammation.» *Trends Neurosci* 30, no. 9 (2007): 464-472., Yan, Z, and Spaulding, HR. «Extracellular Superoxide Dismutase, a Molecular Transducer of Health Benefits of Exercise.» *Redox Biol* 32 (2020): 101508.

21 Dos Santos, L, et al., 2017., Fiatarone, MA, Marks, EC, Ryan, ND, Meredith, CN, Lipsitz, LA, and Evans, WJ. «High-Intensity Strength Training in Nonagenarians. Effects on Skeletal Muscle.» *JAMA* 263, no. 22 (1990): 3029-3034.



Lake Belton, Texas | Dr. Wassim Drissi

## Dispelling the Barriers

### *“I’m too old:”*

The notion that it’s too late to start resistance training is a fallacy that must be debunked. Scientific evidence unequivocally demonstrates that even older adults can build significant benefits from resistance training.<sup>22</sup> The perceived barriers to resistance training are many and varied, particularly for older adults. Age is often the most cited reason, an excuse steeped in the assumption that with the passage of years comes an inevitable decline in physical capacity. However, evidence firmly counters this misconception. It is never too late to reap the benefits of resistance training. On the contrary, studies indicate that individuals in their 70s, 80s, and even 90s can see significant improvements in strength, balance, and flexibility following a properly supervised resistance training program.

### *“I’m too busy:”*

It’s not just age that hinders individuals from engaging in resistance training. Lack of time is another common excuse. But consider this: just two days of strength training per week has been shown to provide substantial benefits.<sup>23</sup> That’s a small investment when you consider the significant return in terms of improved health and vitality.

Additionally, if a single block of time just cannot work, the idea of “exercise snacking,” or performing multiple short bouts of exercise throughout the day, is another data-backed strategy to reap the medical benefits of resistance training.<sup>24</sup> This could look like doing a set of squats while waiting for your morning coffee to brew, or fitting in some push-ups during a commercial break. You’re breaking up what might be a longer gym session into manageable, bite-sized pieces that fit seamlessly into your existing schedule. The key here is that exercise can be flexible and adapt to your unique lifestyle and time constraints.

22 Forbes and Halloran, 161-173., Hunter, GR., et al., 2000., J.M. et al., 2021., Westcott, WL, Winett, RA, Annesi, JJ, Wojcik, JR, Anderson, ES, and Madden, PJ. «Prescribing Physical Activity: Applying the ACSM Protocols for Exercise Type, Intensity, and Duration across 3 Training Frequencies.» *Phys Sportsmed* 37, no. 2 (2009): 51-58., Aguirre, LE, and Villareal, DT. «Physical Exercise as Therapy for Frailty.» *Nestle Nutr Inst Workshop Ser* 83 (2015): 83-92. , Nelson, ME, Fiatarone, MA, Morganti, CM, Trice, I, Greenberg, RA, and Evans, WJ. «Effects of High-Intensity Strength Training on Multiple Risk Factors for Osteoporotic Fractures. A Randomized Controlled Trial.» *JAMA* 272, no. 24 (1994): 1909-1914. , Hagerman, FC, Walsh, SJ, Staron, RS, et al. «Effects of High-Intensity Resistance Training on Untrained Older Men. I. Strength, Cardiovascular, and Metabolic Responses.» *J Gerontol A Biol Sci Med Sci* 55, no. 7 (2000): B336-346., Campbell, WW, Crim, MC, Young, VR, and Evans, WJ. «Increased Energy Requirements and Changes in Body Composition with Resistance Training in Older Adults.» , Borde, R, Hortobágyi, T, and Granacher, U. «Dose-Response Relationships of Resistance Training in Healthy Old Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.» *Sports Med Auckl NZ* 45, no. 12 (2015): 1693-1720.

23 Forbes and Halloran, 161-173., Hong and Kim, 2018., «Move More; Sit Less.» Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Published March 23, 2023. Accessed May 10, 2023., Turner, MN, Hernandez, DO, Cade, W, Emerson, CP, Reynolds, JM, and Best, TM. «The Role of Resistance Training Dosing on Pain and Physical Function in Individuals With Knee Osteoarthritis: A Systematic Review.» *Sports Health* 12, no. 2 (2020): 200-206.

24 Hong and Kim, 2018.



The next time you think you're too busy to exercise, remember this: You're not "too busy" to worship Allah in different ways. This is an effective way to take advantage of "your youth before your old age" and "your health before your illness". Engage in your training with the right intention, and your exercise becomes a form of worship, a part of your path to spiritual growth and closeness to Allah.



*"A Gym is too expensive:"*

Cost and access to gym facilities are also cited as barriers, but you don't need a professional gym with expensive equipment. Bodyweight exercises, resistance bands, and even household items can be utilised effectively in a home-based strength training regimen.<sup>25</sup> The need for a personal trainer is also a valid concern. While professional guidance can be beneficial, especially for beginners, there are plentiful resources available online and in books to guide you through safe and effective exercises.

*"I might get injured:"*

Fear of injury is a valid concern, especially for those with pre-existing conditions. However, when performed correctly, resistance training can actually reduce the risk of injuries by improving joint stability and enhancing overall physical resilience. In fact, resistance training has been found to improve symptoms of back pain and arthritis in some patients.<sup>26</sup> It's key to start slowly, prioritise proper form, and gradually increase intensity.

## Effective Dosage for Health Benefits

Studies show the following as enough to provide the substantial medical benefits that we've discussed:<sup>27</sup>

- Aim for at least 2 sessions per week
- Incorporate exercises that target all major muscle groups
- Each session should include:
  - A minimum of 2-3 sets per exercise
  - 7-9 repetitions per set
  - Work towards lifting around 70-80% of your max weight
  - Significant strength improvements can appear after 10 weeks of training, even in older adults



As diverse readers with varied histories in resistance training, it's crucial to understand that there is no pressure to achieve a high level of performance instantly. The priority should always be the prevention of injury. After all, sustaining an injury keeps you from exercising. Injury will be more likely to occur if you increase training past what your body can adapt to at that time.<sup>28</sup> A careful and measured approach to exercise will not only ensure safety but also create a solid foundation for a consistent fitness lifestyle.

25 Hong and Kim, 2018.

26 Forbes and Halloran, 161-173., Tataryn, N, Simas, V, Catterall, T, Furness, J, and Keogh, JWL. «Posterior-Chain Resistance Training Compared to General Exercise and Walking Programmes for the Treatment of Chronic Low Back Pain in the General Population: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.» *Sports Med - Open* 7, no. 1 (2021): 17., Gabbett, TJ. «The Training-Injury Prevention Paradox: Should Athletes Be Training Smarter and Harder?» *Br J Sports Med* 50, no. 5 (2016): 273-280.

27 Forbes and Halloran, 161-173., Hong and Kim, 2018., «Move More; Sit Less.» Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Published March 23, 2023. Accessed May 10, 2023., Turner, MN, Hernandez, DO, Cade, W, Emerson, CP, Reynolds, JM, and Best, TM. «The Role of Resistance Training Dosing on Pain and Physical Function in Individuals With Knee Osteoarthritis: A Systematic Review.» *Sports Health* 12, no. 2 (2020): 200-206.

28 Gabbett, TJ. «The Training-Injury Prevention Paradox: Should Athletes Be Training Smarter and Harder?» *Br J Sports Med* 50, no. 5 (2016): 273-280.

## To Conclude: Consistency

Consistency is the foundation upon which the benefits of resistance training are built. As Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has said, “The most beloved deed to Allah is the most regular and constant even if it were little.”<sup>29</sup> Consistency in resistance training, therefore, will yield far greater benefits than sporadic, high-intensity workouts.

Our bodies are an Amanah (trust) from Allah, and we will be held accountable for how we treat this trust. As we navigate the myriad challenges of contemporary life, let us not lose sight of the importance of our physical health and its profound impact on our spiritual journey. After all, a strong Muslim is more beloved to Allah.

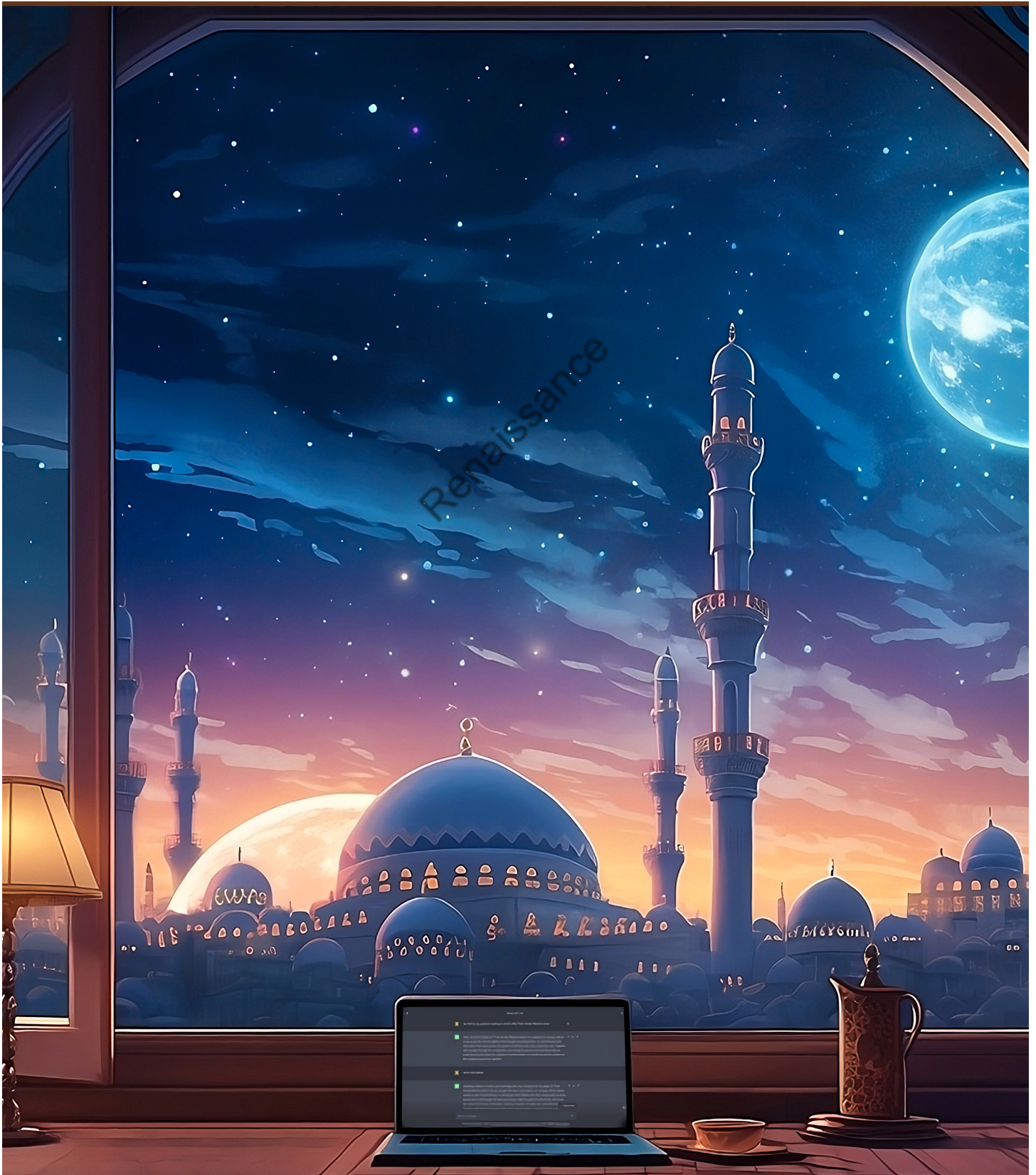


29 Sahih al-Bukhari 54:6465.



# Truth Amidst Misinformation: Into the Multiverse of AI

*Ali Ahmed Malik*





## A Great Task

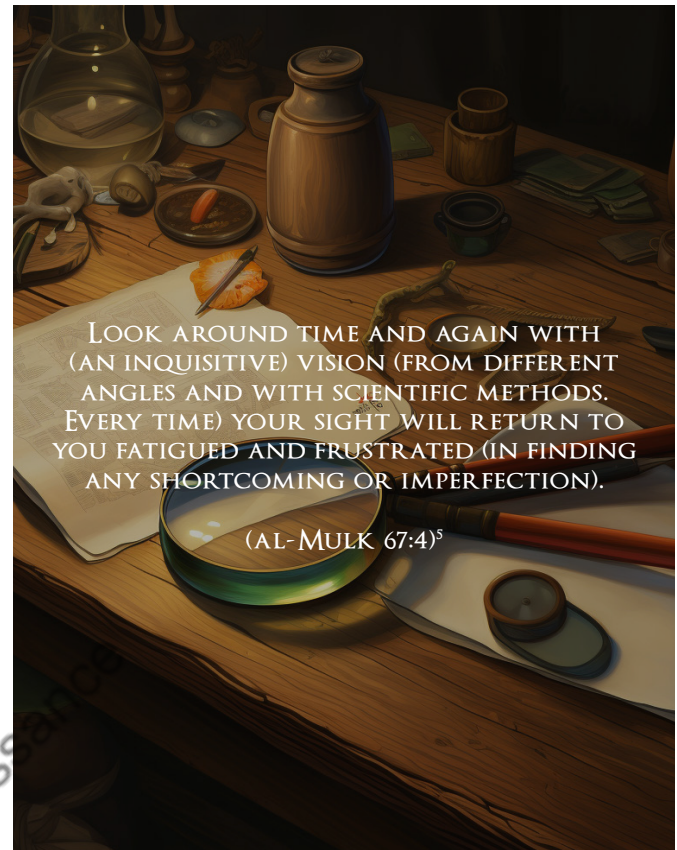
A clear distinction exists between information and knowledge. The former represents a refined data set that can be interpreted and comprehended, and as for the latter, definitions of knowledge may vary. In the context of this digital era, it embodies the actualisation of data, intuition, experience, and belief as an integrated whole. Through this process of actualisation, a Muslim is challenged with the task of finding *al-haq* (The Truth). This article discusses the necessity to pursue *al-haq* in an era of misinformation while using powerful and contemporary AI platforms such as ChatGPT (Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer).

It is not an exaggeration that the exposure to information in this modern era is substantial, as 90% of data from all of time was collected, compiled and exposed digitally in just two years from 2013<sup>1</sup>. And it's only growing.

ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY SAID: "IN THE END OF TIMES, I WILL SPREAD OUT KNOWLEDGE, SUCH THAT EVERY MAN AND WOMAN WILL KNOW IT, EVERY SLAVE AND FREE PERSON WILL KNOW IT, AND EVERY YOUNG AND OLD WILL KNOW IT. ONCE I HAVE DONE THAT WITH THEM, I WILL TAKE THEM TO TASK ON ACCOUNT OF MY RIGHT OVER THEM."<sup>2</sup>



Allah challenges anyone to find any irregularity and disproportion in the system of His creation<sup>3</sup>, as there is none. In that challenge, all of mankind is put to task in being inquisitive for a single purpose, which is to seek and find *al-haq*.<sup>4</sup>



With the introduction of generative artificial intelligence platforms like ChatGPT, the level of access to widespread information is unprecedented and nearly incalculable. Humanity is now equipped with more information than ever and is assigned a great task to find truth and expand one's own knowledge for the sake of Allah.

## The Modern-Day Toolkit

Acquiring essential digital literacy to discern information from misinformation and transform it into meaningful knowledge requires an understanding of the tools that are now at one's disposal. Consequently, a conscientious utilisation of these tools becomes critical, not only to enhance personal knowledge but also to foster a culture of responsible and purposeful use of online resources in future generations.

1 SINTEF. «Big Data, for better or worse: 90% of world's data generated over last two years.» ScienceDaily.

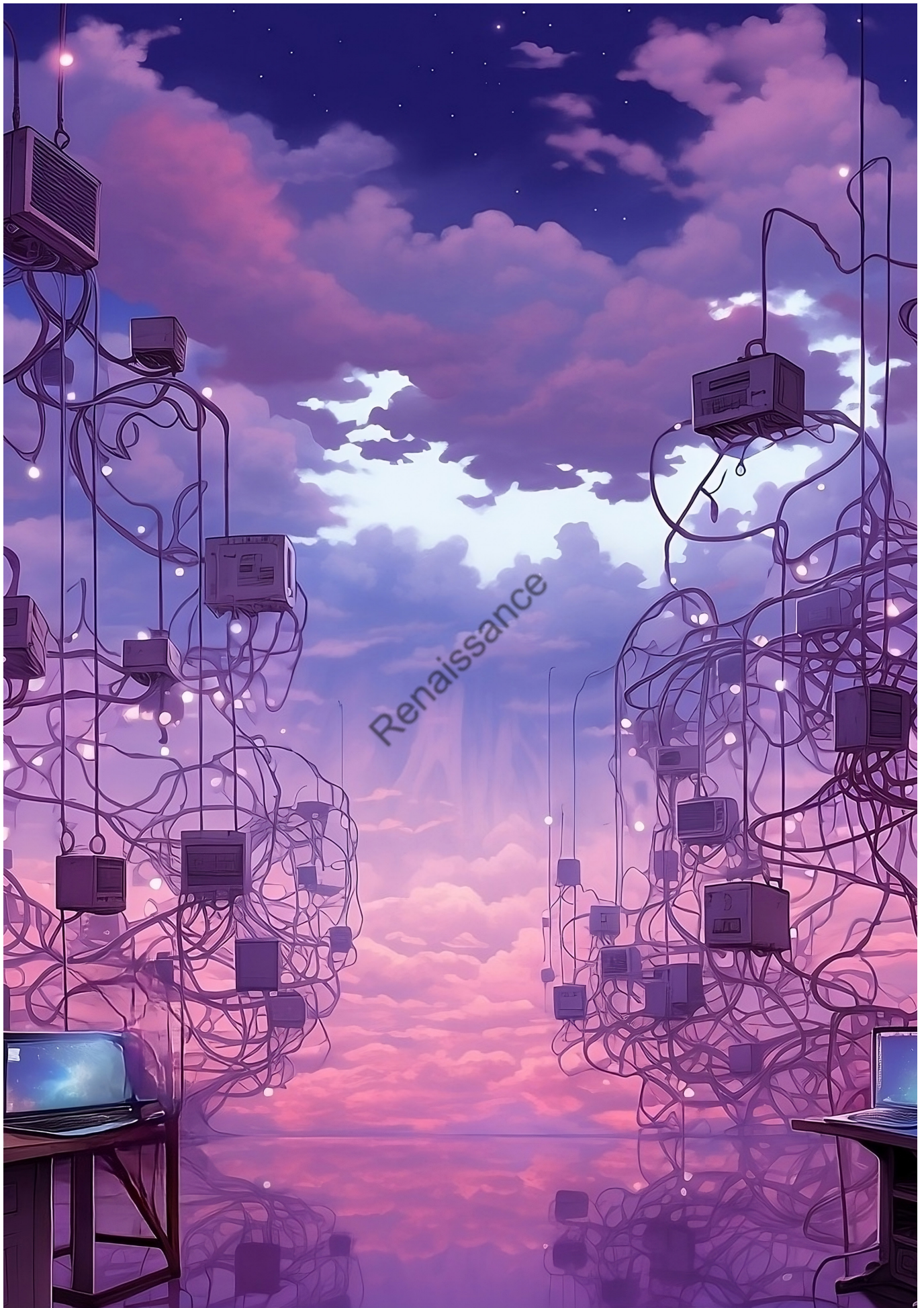
2 al-Darimi. *Sunan*. 253

3 Shaykh-ul-Islam, Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri. *The Glorious Quran*. Minhaj-ul-Quran Publications, 2011, 67:3.

4 Dr Hussain, *Islamic Philosophy & Muslim Philosophers*, 45–49.

5 The Glorious Quran. 67:4.







In recent events, Artificial Intelligence has emerged as a prominent subject of interest across the globe. Eric Neiller from the Wall Street Journal recounts that AI has a relatively long history, beginning as a statistical approach to computer-based decision-making.<sup>6</sup> Over the course of its development, AI has undergone significant transformations. It is now encompassing any technology capable of reasoning, learning, planning, and making decisions, tasks that are typically associated with human intelligence. However, AI enables these activities to be performed by entities other than humans, thus earning its label as Artificial Intelligence.<sup>7</sup>



In the particular case of generative AI, many platforms are gaining rapid attention, such as ChatGPT by OpenAI, heralded to have become “among the fastest-adopted technologies of the Internet era.”<sup>8</sup> ChatGPT is an AI chatbot that utilises a family of large language models (LLM) to predict “the next most likely word in a sentence based on a prompt and previous chat history.”<sup>9</sup> In more discernible terms, the platform allows a user to ask questions, and request a task to be completed.<sup>10</sup>

“ALLAH DESIRES EASE FOR YOU AND DOES NOT  
DESIRE HARDSHIP FOR YOU...”<sup>11</sup>  
(AL-BAQARAH 2:185)

With tools like these at one’s fingertips, there is ease and convenience in many tasks, such as compiling research, answering elaborate questions, and completing copy-related work.<sup>12</sup> As a Muslim, one is encouraged to take the simple route, but oftentimes this is misinterpreted as being negligent. Just as one should understand the benefits of using certain tools, the limitations and barriers of use should also be understood so as not to be led astray.

## Limitations of the Modern-Day Toolkit

In the cases of search engines like Google, users can sift through information for relevant and trustworthy sources. However, in the case of an LLM software like ChatGPT, it reaches into a wide range of publicly available sources that were only last updated in September 2021.<sup>13</sup> Since the platform is not internet-connected, it is not grabbing information retroactively and giving accurate to-date answers. The Journal of International Affairs states that “it could not fact-check itself, leading ChatGPT-supported applications to ‘hallucinate’—generate plausible-sounding yet factually inaccurate information in response to verifiable questions.”<sup>14</sup> This information, although disappointing, does not take away from the overall impressive functional use that ChatGPT provides. Rather, it garners caution when accessing such a powerful tool, especially when seeking information about theology and Islam.



6 Eric Neiller, “Artificial Intelligence 101: Why It’s Different This Time - Tech News Briefing - WSJ Podcasts.”

7 Eric Neiller, 1.

8 ChatGPT, and Journal of International Affairs. “OPENAI’S CHATGPT AND THE PROSPECT OF LIMITLESS INFORMATION: A Conversation with ChatGPT.” *Journal of International Affairs* 75, no. 1 (2022): 379–86.

9 ChatGPT, and Journal of International Affairs. 1.

10 Alex. “ChatGPT: Everything You Need to Know about OpenAI’s GPT-4 Tool.” BBC Science Focus Magazine. Accessed July 25, 2023.

11 The Glorious Quran. 2:185.

12 Agüera y Arcas, Blaise. “Do Large Language Models Understand Us?” *Daedalus* 151, no. 2 (2022): 183–97.

13 Breen, Amanda. “OpenAI’s ChatGPT Just Got a Powerful Update.” *Entrepreneur*, March 2023.

14 ChatGPT, and Journal of International Affairs. 75, no. 1: 379–86.



## Input Determines Output

Considering the tools that humanity has access to for gathering information, it is imperative that a responsible practice is fostered to filter information from misinformation. While technologies like ChatGPT provide general information, there is always a need to approach subject-matter experts on Islam-related matters to comprehend the information (attain knowledge).

Generative AI platforms are programmed to receive prompts and respond with relevant and developed responses. Professor Stuart J. Russell OBE of the University of California is an expert in AI systems and has worked with the WEF (World Economic Forum) to define the depth of use with generative AIs. He defines the fundamental use of AI to be objective-oriented.<sup>15</sup> Where real human intelligence can consider circumstantial information while making decisions, AI is not able to.<sup>16</sup> If one would give a human the task of resolving marital disputes, they would consider all the social-related factors and develop an apt response. Whereas, when asking ChatGPT, “How do I resolve issues with my spouse?”, it gave the generic response of “Open and honest communication is the foundation of any successful relationship.”<sup>17</sup> This prompt lacks the subjective nature of the issue, necessitating a more comprehensive approach. With many complex problems, where does the balance lie between AI’s analytical capabilities and human judgment? And with numerous external and internal factors at play, should AI be relied upon for comprehensive opinions or used solely to extract relevant information?

## Finding Truth

أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ۝ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ  
عَلَيْهِمْ ۝

(al-Fatihah 1:5-6)

“SHOW US THE STRAIGHT PATH, THE PATH OF  
THOSE UPON WHOM YOU HAVE BESTOWED YOUR  
FAVOURS,”<sup>18</sup>

The concept of *al-haq* (The Truth) represents an objective reality and a definitive path that adherents must diligently seek and follow. Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri states, “It is clear human beings do not travel in a vacuum. A journey presupposes a destination and the destination involves a sense of direction.”<sup>19</sup> The right path can be reached from many different avenues, which raises the question of subjectivity. Shaykh-ul-Islam elaborates in that case, “Man needs the right sense of direction to reach the specific end or to realise his coveted goal.”<sup>20</sup> This would mean that the right sense of direction is a product of making correct decisions through the knowledge shared in Islam. This path will be challenging and many times proves one incorrect. But, to stay diligent in finding answers, seeking divine knowledge and finding *al-haq* is the test and duty of all of humanity.

In Islam, indisputable truths exist through divine knowledge: the Noble Quran and the prophetic traditions. Allah commands, “O believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him)”<sup>21</sup> (Qur’an 4:59). With divine knowledge accessible universally, all that is left is interpretations for changing times. The interpretation of divine knowledge and its application are then implemented in this day and age by “those (men of truth) who hold command amongst you...”<sup>22</sup> (Qur’an 4:59). In the case of modern AI, interpretation and comprehension are practises that lie beyond what LLM platforms are currently engineered to do. Therefore, they should not be consulted for opinions, but rather a source to extrapolate information.<sup>23</sup>

In the case of ChatGPT, it does contain and store information that is divinely attributed, which is where a more detailed prompt would be useful. Once asked, “How would I resolve issues arguing with my spouse with consideration from the Quran and Sunnah?”, it replied with referenced information: “Communication with Kindness: The Quran encourages believers to speak with kindness and gentleness (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:83).”<sup>24</sup> With this information, one is then enabled to find the referenced piece, understand and comprehend it through more traditional avenues of learning.

15 Stuart, J. Russell. “How Will AI Change the World?” December 2022.

16 Stuart, J. Russell. 1.

17 Text generated by ChatGPT, July 25, 2023, OpenAI, <https://chat.openai.com/chat>.

18 The Glorious Quran. 1:5-6.

19 Shaykh-ul-Islam, Dr.Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri. *Islam in Various Perspectives*. Minhaj-ul-Quran Publications, 2009.

20 Shaykh-ul-Islam, Dr.Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, *Islam in Various Perspectives*. 90

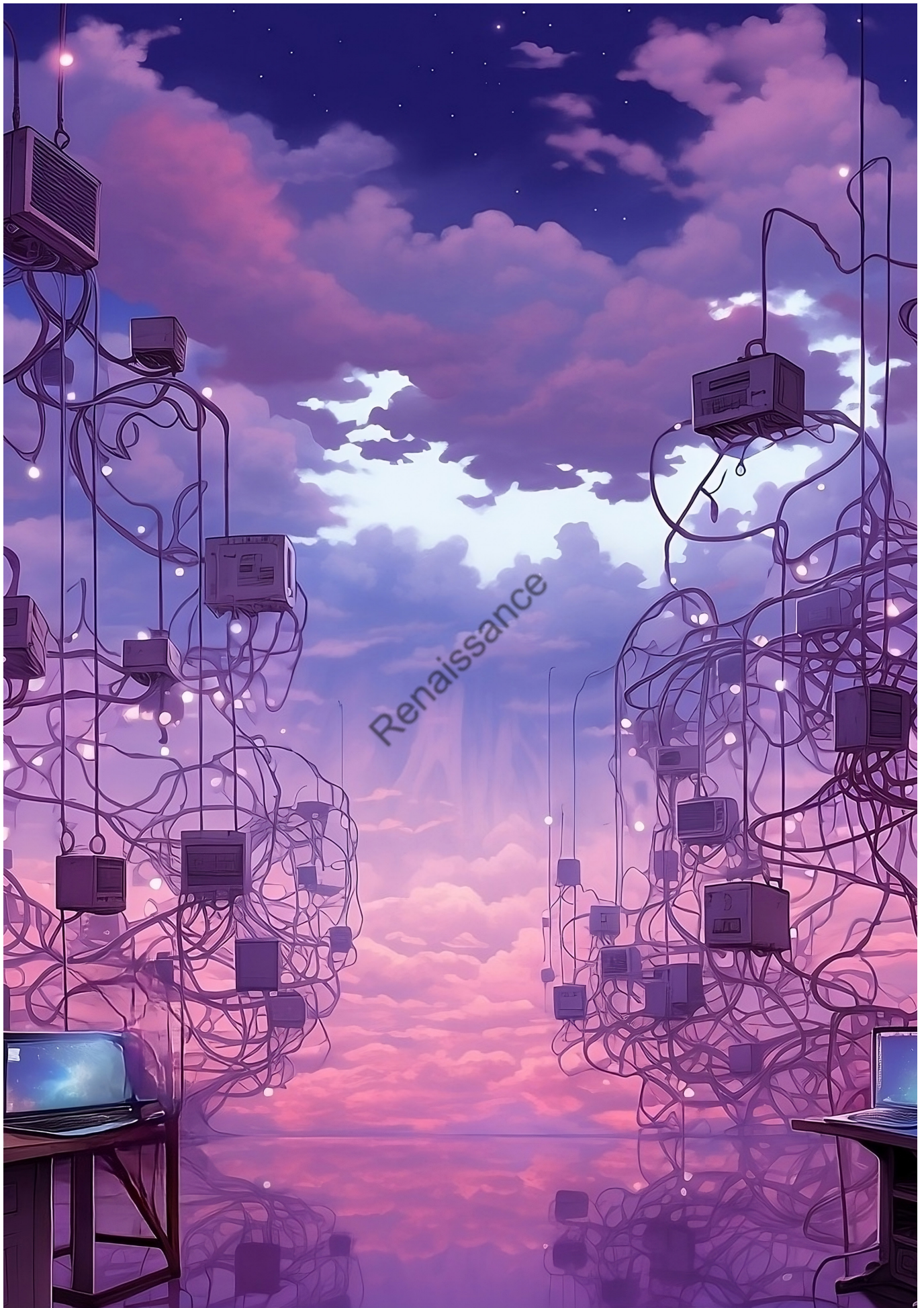
21 The Glorious Quran. 4:59.

22 The Glorious Quran. 4:59.

23 Chandler, Robert, and Marc Chalé. “Harnessing the Momentum of Generative AI.” *Phalanx* 56, no. 2 (2023): 52–54.

24 Text generated by ChatGPT, July 25, 2023, OpenAI, <https://chat.openai.com/chat>.







Humanity is challenged daily to react to unique circumstances and challenges, which enables us to research and comprehend divine knowledge for self-guidance. Since AI is artificial in nature and does not possess the option to react to ongoing issues, it does not seek growth through a greater purpose. AI is limited by its function of being objective-oriented. However, one can argue that the neural networks in which AI learns and ties together information semantically can layer information and draw relevant connections.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, the answers that generative AI programs introduce will still not be comprehensive, all-inclusive and complete with global knowledge and belief systems. This is the insurmountable gap between an artificial intelligence form and humanity.

This further emphasises the need for guidance in the disciplines of Islam; there are no shortcuts to ascension in *‘Ilm* (Knowledge) and spirituality. Albeit technology is deemed to be a shortcut to many functions of our daily life cycle, this is one area where it has not been proven to prevail.

## Bias and an Information Gap

Generative AI can be extensively useful as an alternative to querying subjects, topics and issues in the context of religious understanding. However, there exist information gaps and biases in every LLM training data set: “Training data refers to the initial data that is used to develop a machine learning model, from which the model creates and refines its rules.”<sup>26</sup> Since AI platforms are recycling data within a data set and learning from it, there exists a high risk of amplifying unwanted biases.<sup>27</sup> Oftentimes the LLM scrapes online data that is largely English language content, and this presents the risks of receiving misleading and biased opinions while ignoring datasets of diverse language content.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout the history of Islam, it is without question that the accumulation of knowledge resources appears in historically diverse language

groups such as Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Turkish. Islam has impacted over 2300 language and ethnic subgroups globally, and many of those over Islam’s rich 1400-year-old history have produced knowledge resources.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, relevant LLM softwares like ChatGPT have only gathered training data circulating in the Western hemisphere, meaning it would be more biased to “Western belief systems and unexposed to the global body of knowledge”.<sup>30</sup> This highlights the necessity to exercise caution when digesting potentially biased information and data.



25 Bengio, Yoshua. “MACHINES WHO LEARN.” *Scientific American* 314, no. 6 (2016): 44–51.

26 “The Essential Guide to Quality Training Data for Machine Learning.” CloudFactory, February 2020.

27 Gebru, Timnit, Morgenstern, Jamie, Vecchione, Briana, Vaughan, Jennifer W., Wallach, Hanna, Daumé III, Hal, and Kate Crawford. «Datashets for Datasets.» *ArXiv*, (2018).

28 Chandler, Robert, and Marc Chalé. 52–54.

29 “Muslim World Facts | Encountering the World of Islam,” 2023.

30 Chandler, Robert, and Marc Chalé. 52–54.

## The Inevitable Future

Although many prefer traditional forms of learning knowledge, through books and literature, there exists an inevitable transition to digitised information and knowledge resources. This is especially the case for younger generations that are coined to be *digital natives*.<sup>31</sup> They are accessing all forms of media for entertainment and active or inactive learning, which is exposing them to unfiltered information.

To nurture posterity and encourage growth, adults are tasked to learn digital literacy. Researchers of early childhood education have found a positive correlation between adult mediation and children's use of technology when "adults provided them with a safe climate, encouraged them to participate in conversation, involved them in establishing the goals of the activity, and maintained their interaction with the adults and with the technology."<sup>32</sup> Therefore, learning the limitations and uses of modern technologies is imperative not only for adults but for nurturing future generations of Muslims.

Seeking elements of truth through generative AI technologies should be limited in practice to only extrapolating relevant information, and one should continue following traditional sources of knowledge. In a rapidly advancing technological landscape, it is imperative for Muslims to remain diligent and conscious of how these technologies can influence the great task of finding *al-haq*. To demonstrate the capability of accessible AI, it would be fitting to summarise the contents of this article using *ChatGPT*.

"The beauty of Islam lies in its ability to adapt to contemporary challenges while staying true to its divine principles. In this age of technological advancements, Muslims are urged to approach AI tools, like ChatGPT, with mindfulness and caution in their pursuit of knowledge. Crafting comprehensive prompts that draw upon references from the Quran and Sunnah, and seeking guidance from traditional knowledge sources becomes essential. To ensure a balanced approach, cultivating a critical mindset while utilising digital tools for knowledge acquisition is of utmost importance. While AI platforms can be valuable aids, they should never replace active learning from traditionally diverse and reliable sources. As Muslims embrace the opportunities presented by the digital era, one can blend modern digital literacy with timeless Islamic wisdom. By doing so, one can genuinely seek truth and expand knowledge, all for the sake of Allah."<sup>33</sup>

With the great task of seeking *al-haq* at hand and many tools at one's disposal, the famous pop culture reference to Uncle Ben in Spiderman - "with great power comes great responsibility"<sup>34</sup> - is more applicable now than ever. Spiderman realises the corruptive nature of great power; the question is, do people of today realise this as well?<sup>35</sup> Don't let the changes of this evolving era be a means to become negligent, but instead, become the modern-day hero for Islam and generations to come.



31 Prensky, Marc. "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants Part 1." *On the Horizon* 9 (September 1, 2001): 1–6.

32 Ching-Ting Hsin, Ming-Chaun Li, and Chin-Chung Tsai. "The Influence of Young Children's Use of Technology on Their Learning: A Review." *Journal of Educational Technology & Society* 17, no. 4 (2014): 85–99.

33 Text generated by ChatGPT, July 25, 2023, OpenAI, <https://chat.openai.com/chat>.

34 Aiken, Katherine. "Superhero History: Using Comic Books to Teach U.S. History." *OAH Magazine of History* 24, no. 2 (2010): 47.

35 Bolle, Friedel, and Claudia Vogel. "Power Comes with Responsibility—or Does It?" *Public Choice* 148, no. 3/4 (2011): 459–70.



# The Motivated Muslim: Bridging Neuroscience and Islamic Wisdom

*Dr. Abdullah Raja*





## Faith and Motivation

Motivation has been defined as “the reason why somebody does something or behaves in a particular way” or “the feeling of wanting to do something, especially something that involves hard work and effort.”<sup>1</sup> One thing that can instinctually be understood is that when the human body requires a particular biological need, the body automatically acts. While we comprehend instinctual responses as biological needs, understanding why individuals feel motivated for non-biological actions remains unclear. By exploring this concept, this article seeks to develop a contemporary approach, blending neurobiology and Islamic wisdom, to enhance motivation, increase *iman* (faith), and strengthen positive Islamic actions.



A Muslim’s *iman* is never stagnant - it increases and decreases throughout one’s life and on a daily basis; one might have different levels of *iman* when praying fajr and asr on the same day. This notion is well documented in hadith, as *Abu Ja’far* reported from *Hazrat Umayr ibn Habib (RA)* that: “Faith increases and decreases.” It was then asked, “How does it increase and decrease?” *Umayr* said, “If we remember our Lord and fear him, it will increase. If we are heedless and we forget and we waste our time, it will decrease.”<sup>2</sup>

This article posits that these fluctuations in *iman* are rooted in motivation. The above Hadith postulates a relationship between feelings and actions and their subsequent effect on our *iman*. Theologians, philosophers and psychologists have long studied this interdependency between feelings and actions. An age-old question amongst intellectuals is what posits a necessary action: Is an action only possible after a feeling for it has been invoked, or can a necessary action be taken simply through will, regardless of the feeling? This relationship and the interdependency of actions and feelings can be summarised in one word: *motivation*.

The advent of the 20th century has allowed scientists and psychologists to better understand the science behind motivation through molecular neurobiology. Motivation is more than just a feeling—at its core is dopamine, a neurotransmitter that governs motivation and an internal, almost intuitive, cost/benefit analysis on a metaphysical, molecular level.<sup>3</sup> There are a plethora of studies and experiments that show that a lack of dopamine causes a decrease in feeding, locomotion, and a general lack of sensory-motor response.<sup>4</sup> Thus, dopamine is essential in giving one enough energy and motivation to achieve goals. However, individuals find it subjectively difficult to attach dopamine to a task they do not want to complete, regardless of the necessity of completing that action. There are two simple solutions outlined in the Quran and Hadith that can help spike dopamine and subsequently increase motivation.

### Method 1: Mental Contrasting

A study shows that one of the more well-researched methods of increasing motivation and achieving a set goal is ‘mental contrasting’.<sup>5</sup> This technique utilises interchanging positive and negative thoughts to force dopamine neurons to activate and help achieve one’s goals. This can include thinking of the positive benefits or results achieved upon completing the task while periodically thinking of all the negatives that could stem from leaving the task unfinished.<sup>6</sup>

1 Oxford Advanced Learner’s, Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com, 2022.

2 Transmitted by Imam al-Bayhaqi in *Shuab al-Iman*, 55.

3 Salamone, John D., and Merce Correa. 2012. Review of *The Mysterious Motivational Functions of Mesolimbic Dopamine*. *Neuron* 76 (3): 470-85.

4 Salamone, Review of *The Mysterious Motivational Functions*, 2012.

5 Oettingen, Gabriele, Hyeon-ju Pak, and Karoline Schnetter. 2001. “Self-Regulation of Goal-Setting: Turning Free Fantasies about the Future into Binding Goals.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 80 (5): 736–53.

6 Ph.D, Nicole Celestine. 2020. “What Is Mental Contrasting and How to Benefit from It?” *PositivePsychology.com*. January 1, 2020.



The Quran is a perfect example of this concept. Allah continually uses the themes of Paradise and Hell to elucidate positive and negative thoughts within the reciter to try and help them become better Muslims. There are also powerful references to past Ummahs who have transgressed and the punishments they have received, as well as examples of Prophets عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام who have been awarded for their perseverance and Dawah.

## Method 2: Growth Mindset

“Growth Mindset”, a term coined by Dr Carol Dweck, is a philosophy that argues that the struggle towards one’s goals should be the motivator, not the goal itself.<sup>7</sup> This idea, backed by Dr Huberman, a neuroscientist, articulates that one needs to not only release dopamine but also associate dopamine release with the actual challenge of completing a given task.<sup>8</sup> To achieve a growth mindset, as opposed to a fixed mindset, psychologists implore a technique that can be loosely coined as ‘contextual truth’.<sup>9</sup> Contextual truth involves training oneself to empathise with the pain and fears one might feel while accomplishing goals and seeing them as positive rather than negative. This may feel like an internal lie. However, it is under the ‘context’ of truth because it is a feeling one wishes to invoke within oneself.

Contextual truth can also be connected to one’s *iman*, rooting actions in *tawakkul* (reliance) will help achieve a growth mindset. Shaykh ul Islam Dr Tahir ul Qadri advises that the foundation of *tawakkul*, reliance on Allah, is to develop absolute certainty and trust in Allah.<sup>10</sup>



In this ayat of the Holy Qur’an, Allah The Almighty assures us within His infinite wisdom, not once but twice, that truly, with hardship comes ease. Uttering one’s niyyah during salah while not feeling that sincere connection to Allah is also a contextual truth that is based on love and faith; while one may not feel *khushoo* (serenity), the repeated bodily motions of salah will eventually reach spirit and mind as well. Once an action, like salah, is done enough times and with a committed mindset, internal dopamine neurons are activated, thereby elucidating the feeling of motivation and pleasure during the actual work rather than just the end result.<sup>12</sup> During times of low *iman*, contextual truths can be used to grow our mindsets; rather than becoming demotivated, one should hold tight to *tawakkul* in everyday actions to trigger the process of dopamine production and activation.

## Method 3: An Ultimate Purpose, Not a Goal

Having *tawakkul* in Allah and believing in the ultimate purpose of pleasing Allah is the goal of every Muslim.<sup>13</sup> However, we have been conditioned to set a finite number of goals, and we often forget our ultimate purpose. Upon reaching certain goals, one feels a certain sense of accomplishment and euphoria through dopamine release. However, over time, the dopamine begins to decrease, and we must start the process all over again to set a new goal and work towards that goal. This creates an infinite paradoxical loop where one constantly hops from one goal to the next while not achieving a holistic goal or a goal that may make the ‘ultimate’ picture clear. James Clear asserts that a better method to increase motivation is to set up a system to make progress.<sup>14</sup> This will always help motivate one towards a greater purpose rather than finite goals. While keeping our ultimate purpose in mind, smaller goals can motivate us to achieve ways of pleasing Allah in this world and the next.

7 Dweck, Carol S. 2016. *Carol Dweck’s Mindset : The New Psychology of Success : Summary*. Ant Hive Media.

8 Huberman Lab, *Episode 39*, September 30, 2021.

9 Bielecki, Andrzej. 2020. “The Systemic Concept of Contextual Truth.” *Foundations of Science* 26 (4): 807–24.

10 Dr.Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, Shaykh-ul-Islam. *Fulfilling the Rights of Tawqa*.

11 Surah ash-Sharh , Chapter # 94, Ayah #5-6 (Translation from Irfan-ul-Quran)

12 Huberman Lab, *Episode 39*, September 30, 2021.

13 Dr.Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, Shaykh-ul-Islam. *Human (Insan) Is Created to Love the Divine*.

14 Clear, James. 2018. *Atomic Habits*. Penguin Publishing Group.

Islam undoubtedly teaches us this very phenomenon to permanently give us the motivation to increase our motivation continually. To achieve our Ultimate Purpose is to please Allah, and to please Allah is to purify our Nafs and place Him before anything to achieve success:

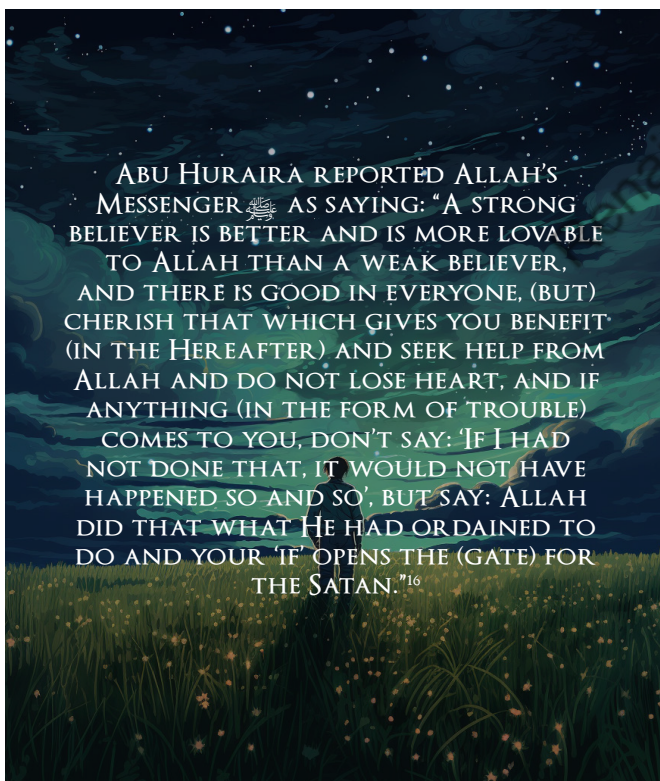
قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّهَا ۝

(ASH-SHAMS 91:9)

“INDEED THE ONE WHO PURIFIES HIS (ILL-COMMANDING) SELF (FROM ALL VAIN AND VICIOUS DESIRES AND CULTIVATES IN IT VIRTUE AND PIOUSNESS) SUCCEEDS.”<sup>15</sup>

## Method 4: Follow the Sunnah

The final method is deeply rooted in the Prophetic tradition. At any point in time when one feels stuck or can only find a lacklustre approach to a task, the Hadith below provides an all-encompassing management plan or modus operandi.



To extrapolate lessons from this hadith, anyone can follow one of the following five steps:

1. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ states that a strong believer is more beloved to Allah the Almighty.

This strength is not only referred to as the physical strength one possesses but can be understood to be the strength in terms of acquiring skills, talents and education. Thus, the first step is to acquire good health, skills, or knowledge as they are all-inclusive in the task of becoming a 'strong believer'.

2. 'Cherish that which gives you benefit'. When one cherishes something, a plan must be formulated to keep the objective clear and straightforward. Since the believers' ultimate purpose lies in pleasing Allah, begin to create short-term goals that are achievable and reasonable.

3. 'Seek help from Allah'. Before any task, or as problems and issues arise, do not shy away from asking Allah for help. Indeed, "Allah alone is your Excellent Protector; what an Excellent Protector and what an Excellent *Helper*"<sup>17</sup>

4. 'Do not lose heart', do not give up! We return to the concept of peaks and valleys. Just as our *iman* does not stay stagnant, we are required to maintain a firm level of conviction in our hearts. A Muslim is one that continuously struggles and strives in the way of Allah.

5. 'Don't say: If I had not done that, it would not have happened so and so'. The accumulation of negative thoughts nurtures a negative mindset. As humans begin to explore "what ifs" and begin ruminating on the past, this only leads to a downward spiral that will ultimately produce a lack of motivation. Since the "if" opens the (gate) for Satan", as believers, it is foundational that our mindset remains to accept the wisdom of not knowing the "whys" and the "what ifs" as Allah is truly All-Knowing.

## Putting it All Together

The relationship between the fluctuating levels of *iman* and one's level of motivation is quite evident, motivation methods can be used to increase one's faith. To get started, one should first observe and self-reflect on their current state of *iman*. Allah commands us, "So always worship Me, and establish Prayer for the sake of My remembrance."<sup>18</sup> As a believer, prayer is a testament of faith (*iman*), and as one begins to lose their foothold in faith, a lack of not only interest in prayer but the action of it can be found. The motivation practices mentioned above can enable believers to find practical ways of increasing one's *iman*.

15 Surah Ash-Shams, Chapter # 91, Ayah # 09 (Translation from Irfan-ul-Quran)

16 Transmitted in Sahih Muslim, Kitab-ul-Qadr (Book 46), 42.

17 Surah Al-Anfal, Chapter # 8, Ayah # 40 (Translation from Irfan-ul-Quran)

18 Surah Taha, Chapter 20, Ayah 14 (Translation from Irfan-ul-Quran)



# Nature: A Path To Strengthen Our Relationship With Allah and His Beloved Messenger ﷺ

*Dr. Madeeha Mian Drissi*





If you've ever felt the stillness of a forest, or witnessed the ebb and flow of a riverbed, you likely have experienced a feeling of awe. If you've seen the majesty of a wide-open landscape and the far-away peaks of mountains, you've likely felt humbled by the enormity of the world. And if you've left the cities far enough to escape the city lights, you've likely witnessed the endless expanse of the night sky, forming a celestial tapestry. And beneath a night sky like this – one filled with stars that are millions of light years away – it's difficult not to think about our place in this world. It's difficult not to contemplate where we've come from and where we are headed. In all of these settings and environments, it is easy to remember that we, like every other being, are dependent on Him, alone.

Experiencing this admiration of Almighty Allah's creation allows us to contemplate on His power (*qudrat*), majesty, and glory. The Holy Quran reminds us:

“VERILY, IN THE CREATION OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, AND IN THE ALTERNATION OF THE NIGHT AND THE DAY, AND IN THE SHIPS (AND VESSELS) WHICH SAIL THROUGH THE OCEAN CARRYING CARGO PROFITABLE FOR THE PEOPLE, AND IN THE (RAIN)WATER WHICH ALLAH POURS DOWN FROM THE SKY, REVIVING THEREWITH THE EARTH TO LIFE AFTER ITS DEATH, AND (THE EARTH) IN WHICH HE HAS SCATTERED ANIMALS OF ALL KINDS, AND IN THE CHANGING WIND DIRECTIONS, AND IN THE CLOUDS (THAT TRAIL) BETWEEN THE SKY AND THE EARTH, DUTY-BOUND (UNDER ALLAH'S COMMAND), CERTAINLY (IN THESE) ARE (MANY) SIGNS (OF ALLAH'S POWER) FOR THOSE WHO PUT THEIR REASON TO WORK.”<sup>1</sup>

(AL-BAQARAH 2:164)

Unfortunately, for many people, these experiences outdoors have been substituted: screens and walls have replaced open skies, and the sounds of construction and traffic overshadow the rustle of trees. Indeed, the increasing urbanisation of our world has contributed to some of the greatest advancements in the fields of technology, medicine, and education. Yet this rapid pace of urbanisation has also led to a growing disconnect from nature in both children and adults.

## The Disconnect

This disconnect from nature has various implications, especially on mental and physical health, and this has become more apparent with recent literature.

For example, in a survey of 11,817 adults, children, and parents in the United States between 2015-2016, The Nature of Americans National Report study demonstrated that as children age, media use grows while time outdoors shrinks.<sup>2</sup> In this survey, parents reported that their kids spend at least three times as much time on electronics (19 hours) than they do outside (7 hours) by the time they're 12 years old! And the trend continues: many American adults spend 5 hours or fewer each week outside.<sup>3</sup> This study only confirms what we are observing around us: collectively, both children and adults are spending more time in front of screens than creating experiences outdoors.



Hyalite Canyon, Montana | Dr. Madeeha Mian

1 Shaykh-ul-Islam, Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri. *The Glorious Quran*. Minhaj-ul-Quran Publications, 2011. 2:164

2 Stephen Kellert et al., «The Nature of Americans National Report: Disconnection and Recommendations for Reconnection» (DJ Case and Associates, 2017).

3 Kellert et al., 2017.





Sedona, Arizona | Dr. Madecha Mian

Furthermore, as time spent outdoors has decreased, the prevalence of obesity and ADHD has increased.<sup>4</sup> In US children and adolescents, for example, the prevalence of ADHD was 6.1% in 1997-1998, and increased to 10.2% by 2015-2016.<sup>5</sup> Although these numbers can be due to improved diagnostic means and recognition of the condition, a growing body of research is also demonstrating that spending time outside improves symptoms of ADHD; consequently, spending less time outdoors can worsen symptoms. In a study that surveyed children with ADHD, children who participated in outdoor activities appeared to have a significant reduction in their ADHD symptoms compared to controls in “indoor” settings.<sup>6</sup> Of note, these settings were not national parks or backcountry environments - children had these results in “green settings” as simple as backyards, school playgrounds, city parks, or a stand of trees in the neighbourhood.<sup>7</sup>

Regarding obesity, from 1999-2000 through 2017-2020, the US obesity prevalence alone increased from 30.5% to 41.9%, and the prevalence of severe obesity increased from 4.7% to 9.2%.<sup>3</sup> Not surprisingly, less time spent outside may also

contribute to this increase, as time spent outdoors has been associated with decreases in BMI scores. Children who experienced higher levels of outdoor time, for example, were 42% less likely to be obese at the end of the year as compared with children who experienced low levels of outdoor time.<sup>8</sup>

The physical and mental benefits that come when we take a few steps outside are clear. Moreover, spending time outdoors can also serve as a unique pathway to deepening our spiritual connection with Almighty Allah and His Beloved Prophet ﷺ.

## Nature and Our Beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

During a lecture on the ‘Love of the Prophet ﷺ’, Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri eloquently described several examples through *ahadith* how tones, mountains, branches, and trees are aware of Almighty Allah as their Creator – – and recognise His Beloved Prophet ﷺ.<sup>9</sup> Shaykh-ul-Islam explained how two things are compulsory for the natural world: the remembrance of Allah, and the love and reverence for His Beloved Prophet ﷺ.

4 Guifeng Xu et al., «Twenty-Year Trends in Diagnosed Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Among US Children and Adolescents, 1997-2016» (2018), CDC, «National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey,» accessed July 5, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>.

5 Xu et al., 2018.

6 Frances E. Kuo, «A Potential Natural Treatment for Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: Evidence From a National Study» (2004).

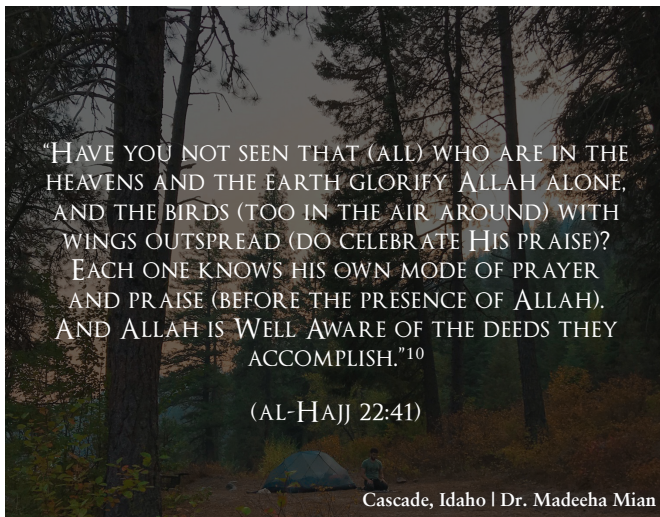
7 Kuo, 2004.

8 Arya Ansari et al., «Combating Obesity in Head Start: Outdoor Play and Change in Children's Body Mass Index» (2015).

9 Minhaj TV, «Muhabbat-e-Rasool (Ahwal e Jamadat o Nabatat ki Roshni mein),» January 6, 2006; Jamia Masjid Minhaj-ul-Quran, Lahore, <https://youtu.be/IXh69r6-rZQ>.

This is evident in the following examples:

Regarding the natural world and His remembrance, Almighty Allah has said in the Qur'an:



From this verse, it is evident that *every creation* in the heavens and earth glorifies Almighty Allah, each in its own mode of prayer that only Almighty Allah is aware of. And this truly applies to *all* of creation – including animals, plants, stones, and mountains.

In the same way, Almighty Allah has also made the love and respect for our Beloved Prophet ﷺ obligatory upon His creation. This is evident through several *ahadith*:

Ali ibn Abi Talib narrated how rocks and trees would greet the Prophet ﷺ:

"I was with the Prophet ﷺ in Makkah, and we went out to one of its suburbs. He did not face any mountain or tree but that it would say, 'Peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allah.'"<sup>11</sup>

Additionally, there was one stone in a corner of a street in Makkah that used to send salutations of peace upon the Beloved Prophet ﷺ every time he would pass by it – even before the announcement of his Prophethood. Regarding this stone, Jabir bin Samurah reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Indeed in Makkah, there is a rock that used to pay salutations of peace upon me during the night of my advent, and I know it even now."<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, there is the well-known observation of Bohira, the monk and scholar: before the declaration of prophethood, when he was a young child, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was travelling towards Syria to trade with his uncle, Abu Talib, and some of the older men in Quraysh. It is narrated by Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari:

"Abu Talib departed to Syria, and the Prophet ﷺ left with him, along with some older men from the Quraish. When they came across a monk they stopped there and began setting up their camp, and the monk came out to them. Before that, they used to pass by him and he wouldn't come out nor pay attention to them." He said: "They were setting up their camp when the monk was walking amidst them until he came and took the hand of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Then he said: 'This is the master of all the worlds, this is the Messenger of the Lord of the worlds. Allah will raise him as a mercy to all the worlds' So some of the older people from the Quraish said: "What do you know?" He said: 'When you people came along from the road, not a rock nor a tree was left, except that it prostrated, and they do not prostrate except for a Prophet. And I can recognise him by the seal of the Prophethood which is below his shoulder blade, like an apple.' Then he went back and made them some food, and when he brought it to them, he [the Prophet ﷺ] was tending to the camels. So, he said: 'Send for him.' So he came, and there was a cloud over him that was shading him. When he came close to the people, he found that they had beaten him to the tree's shade. So, when he sat down, the shade of the tree leaned towards him. He (the monk) said: 'Look at the shade of the tree leaning towards him.'"<sup>13</sup>



10 The Glorious Quran. 22:41.

11 At-Tirmidhi in Sunan, Bk: The Virtues of the Prophet, Ch: What has been related about the signs proving Prophethood of the Prophet (ﷺ), and what Allah, the Mighty and Sublime, distinguished Him with, # 3626.

12 At-Tirmidhi in Sunan, Bk: The Virtues of the Prophet, Ch: What has been related about the signs proving Prophethood of the Prophet (ﷺ), and what Allah, the Mighty and Sublime, distinguished Him with, # 3624.

13 At-Tirmidhi in Sunan, Bk: The Virtues, Ch: What has been related About The Start of The Prophet's Prophethood, #3619. Also reported by al-Hakim, al-Mustadrak, 2:615; Imam Bayhaqi, Imam abu Nu'aym, Imam hajr Asqalani.









Grapevine Lake, Texas | Dr. Madeeha Mian

Bohira had read about the arrival of the final messenger in the *Torah*, the *Injil*, and other previous scriptures, but had never seen Prophet Muhammad ﷺ before. It was only upon seeing the trees and rocks prostrate before Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that Bohira immediately knew that the Final Messenger had arrived.

Lastly, there is the beautiful example of *Ustune Hannanah*, the date palm tree stem which Prophet Muhammad ﷺ used to lean on while delivering Friday *khutbah* (sermon) in *al-Masjid an-Nabawi*. It was narrated by several companions, including Abdullah bin Abbas, Anas bin Malik, Tufail bin Ubayy bin Ka'b, and Jabir bin Abdullah:

“One day, a companion made a new pulpit in the mosque, and our Beloved Prophet ﷺ passed by the old tree stem to deliver the sermon from the new pulpit. Upon passing it, before even reaching the new pulpit, the dried tree stem started crying like a

child. The Prophet ﷺ came down and embraced it on his chest as it continued to cry like a child being quietened. While the Prophet ﷺ embraced it, the weeping stopped after some time. The Prophet ﷺ asked the dried stem of the tree, ‘If you desire, I will send you back to the garden so that you can become a fresh and green tree-like before, remaining vibrant forever with fruit, or if you desire, I shall plant you in Jannah, where the Divine Friends of Almighty Allah (*awliya*) will have your fruit.’ The tree desired to be planted in Jannah. The Beloved Prophet ﷺ said, ‘By Allah, if I didn’t console it, it would continue crying in my love until the Day of Judgment.’”<sup>14</sup>.

Regarding this example, the great *wali* and scholar, Imam Hasan al-Basri, would weep while teaching this miraculous event to his students. He would say to them: “A piece of wood demonstrated love and longing for Allah’s Noble Messenger ﷺ, so you should feel more love than that.”<sup>15</sup>

14 Sahih al-Bukhari 2:3584. Also reported by Ibn Shayba, Ibn Majah, Tabarani in *al-M’ujam al Awsat*, Abu Ya’la, at Tirmidhi in *Sunan*, Ahmad in *Musnad*, Daarimi in *Sunan* 1:32.

15 Qadi Iyad, *ash-Shifa*, 1:305.



## Restoring Our Connection

As mentioned earlier, we do not have to make a trip to a national park to experience the benefits of nature, or to use nature as a pathway to deepen our connection with Almighty Allah and His Beloved Prophet ﷺ – a few steps outside is all one needs to start. The following are a few actionable steps for turning an ordinary walk into one that will allow us more nearness to Almighty Allah and His Beloved Prophet ﷺ.

1. **Set your intention:** As with any act, the intention, *niyyah*, is important. Before your walk, start with ablution (*wudu*), and set the intention to seek closeness to Almighty Allah and His Beloved Messenger ﷺ.

2. **Mindfulness:** Be fully present. Keep your phone away, quiet your mind, and tune in to the sounds, sights, and scents around you. The sounds of birds and leaves and the scent of flowers all serve as a reminder of Almighty Allah's power, mercy, and beauty, and the intricacy and balance He has created.

3. **Contemplation and Durood:** When you see trees, mountains, branches, or stones, remember the *ahadith* that described how even these objects had love and respect for our Beloved Prophet ﷺ, and that they recognised him even before his prophethood

was announced. Let the trees and rocks you are surrounded by outside serve as reminders for you to send *Salawat* upon the Beloved Prophet ﷺ.

4. **Dhikr and Dua:** When you are spending time in the outdoors, you are spending time in the presence of things that are always remembering Almighty Allah. Take a few moments to pray or engage in *Dhikr*, the remembrance of Almighty Allah, during your walk. This could be as simple as reciting short phrases like “*Subhan Allah*” (Glory be to Allah), “*Alhamdulillah*” (All praises be to Allah), or “*Allahu Akbar*” (Allah is the Greatest).

5. **Sustainability and Care:** There are many examples of the natural world loving RasoolAllah SAW; similarly, we should love nature for its love for RasoolAllah SAW. Remember that nature is a trust (*amanah*) from Almighty Allah, and we must treat the environment responsibly. Leave every place better than you found it, and follow leave-no-trace principles.

By restoring our connection with nature, we not only improve our health and well-being, but Almighty Allah also allows it to be a means of spiritual connection to Him and His beloved Prophet ﷺ, whom the natural world recognised, loved, respected, and saluted.



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