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PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN SOCIAL LIFE

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Introduction

When a person embraces the *deen* of Islam, this results in profound changes in his or her life, both inwardly and outwardly. A new Muslim may appear to be the same person before and after affirming the *shahada* in front of witnesses, but both inwardly and outwardly his or her world is initially turned upside down: well-established habits may need to be modified or even abandoned – and new habits will need to be learned and acquired; deep seated opinions and beliefs will inevitably be reviewed and changed or even relinquished – and a new way of understanding existence and expressing that understanding in words never used before will gradually be acquired and expanded. Indeed one of the *du'as* of the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was, “O Allah, teach me to see things as they are!”

This process of transformation is both a challenge and an adventure of discovery, but at times it can be a source of frustration and rebellion as the new Muslim encounters as never before his or her own experiencing self, which can be defined as “an illusory solidification of events obscuring a light”, where the ‘illusory solidification of events’ is the picture you have formed of who you are and what you want and dislike – your *nafs*, while the ‘light’ is who you really are, your spirit – your *ruh*.

The extent and nature of this process of transformation depends very much on what the beliefs and lifestyle of the new Muslim were up until the high point in his or her life of accepting Islam was reached. The more in harmony these are with the beliefs and practices of Islam, the smoother the transition is – but whether the new Muslim comes from a nominally ‘Muslim’ family whose members may have Muslim names but who do not worship Allah, or was a practising Jew, or Christian, or Hindu, or Buddhist, or an agnostic or atheist not following any particular religion other than the prevailing cultural customs and norms of the society in which he or she has been born, raised and educated, there will inevitably be changes in practice and lifestyle accompanied by a change in that person’s ‘schema’, that is, in his or her understanding of the nature of existence and his or her place in it – and this in turn may give rise to or remove problems.

In other words, no-one is guaranteed a smooth ride since to embrace Islam is to be plunged into an ocean without a shore on a journey whose destination is where you originally came from – **Allah** – and yet at the same time that this mighty vista inwardly begins to unfold, it remains necessary to continue to socially interact with those whom you already know, as well as with those whom you are still to meet in the ripeness of time. This prospect can be both exhilarating and terrifying, so that sometimes you feel like an eagle in the sky and sometimes you feel like a motherless child.

All the difficulties and pleasures which you used to encounter in social life before Islam do not disappear the moment you embrace Islam. They continue – but, over time, you find that there is a huge difference between what life was like before you embraced Islam and how you experience it ‘now’ – and this is that gradually our hearts become more and more at peace, no matter whether our inward state or outward situation is in expansion or contraction and irrespective of whether our social life is easy or difficult. Indeed the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said that ‘being balanced’ means that all the opposites are the same for you.

In other words, gradually your inability to see and recognise is replaced by insight and perception – and gradually your confusion is replaced by certainty, so that the problems you used to encounter in social life gradually disappear. Embracing Islam and following the way of Islam results in this change in your being – and this, as they say in England, is the proof of the pudding! It works:

Only in the remembrance of Allah can the heart find peace.¹

How different this is compared to those who make a big commotion in life in order to draw attention to themselves because they cannot bear to face the fact that they do not know where they have come from and where they are going and what their place and meaning in existence is – and so they resort to orchestrating elaborate attention seeking distractions in order to avoid facing their inward existential uncertainty and panic.

Furthermore, the changes which take place when a person embraces Islam and takes on this *deen* as his or her life-transaction, are amplified further simply because the way of life of Islam is transformative: it changes you. If you follow the *sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad, *salla’llahu alayhi wa salam*, it changes you, on a daily basis, outwardly and inwardly. The manner in which you act and behave towards others and the way in which you see and perceive the world keeps on being refined and reformed – and indeed one of the *du’as* of the Prophet Muhammad was, “O Allah, keep me in change!”

These changes inevitably affect a new Muslim’s social life: he or she finds that social interactions and exchanges with family and friends change, sometimes dramatically – and that the way in which he or she interacts with people whom he or she meets for the first time are handled differently, whether or not they are aware of the profound change which has just taken place and which will continue to take place. The new Muslim finds that doors which used to be open and taken for granted are now closed tight, while doors which used to be locked or hidden are now apparent and waiting to be opened.

¹ *Qur’an* : 13.8

It may be, for example, that before embracing Islam, the new Muslim used to meet his or her friends over a glass of beer or wine and celebrate Christmas, even if he or she was not a practising Christian – not as an informed choice but as part of a very much taken for granted social conditioning. It may be that he or she had a boy friend or a girl friend who did not wish to follow suit and accept Islam and marry. To filter out or abandon those aspects of his or her former life style which are not in harmony with the beliefs and teachings of Islam may be refreshingly easy for a new Muslim – or extremely difficult, since, as the well-known saying goes, old habits die hard.

Many new Muslims find that those who used to be their friends or acquaintances before Islam gradually fade out of their lives or disappear altogether, sometimes overnight, because they no longer share the same *qibla* either in life or in what they worship. Allah says in the *Qur'an*:

The fools among the people will ask,
 ‘What has made them turn round
 from the direction they used to face?’
 Say, ‘Both East and West belong to Allah.
 He guides whomever He wills to a straight path.’²

And no matter how hard a new Muslim may try, with the best of intentions, he or she finds, as the Prophet Muhammad himself found with his uncle Abu Talib ibn Abdal-Muttalib, that you cannot make anyone Muslim, even the ones you love:

You cannot guide those you would like to
 but Allah guides those He wills.³

Coming to terms with this unavoidable truth is perhaps the greatest social problem that a new Muslim initially encounters – until he or she recognises and accepts that the entire matter is in Allah’s hands:

When Allah desires to guide someone,
 He expands his breast to Islam.
 When He desires to misguide someone,
 He makes his breast narrow and constricted
 as if he were climbing up into the sky.⁴

The doors of mosques all over the world are now wide open for the new Muslim and he or she now has millions of brothers and sisters in the *deen* who come in every age, form and colour and from every ethnic and social background and with whom, wherever he or she travels, food that is both *halal* and *tayeb* can be shared and with whom the two *Ids* of Islam can be celebrated. So there is no loss in this vastly expanded social dynamic – and yet adapting to these changes and adjusting to letting go of what used to be and taking on new realities in the here and now is sometimes, humanly speaking, difficult.

2 *Qur'an* : 2.142

3 *Qur'an* : 28.56

4 *Qur'an* : 6.125

Islam is a filter of culture. Whether in a region or a society as a whole or as regards an individual or a community of individuals and families, embracing Islam entails retaining what is acceptable and beneficial and expelling what is unacceptable and harmful.

This process of transformation is not always easy, but it is always positive. In the words of Bob Dylan, “He not busy being born is busy dying,” and, to quote D H Lawrence, “There is no birth without birth-pangs.”

Of course the greatest door that opens up knowledge and understanding of the nature of existence and of the Creator of all that exists including your self is the Noble *Qur’an* which Allah describes as, “That Book, in which there is no doubt.”⁵

And of course the key to opening the door of the Majestic *Qur’an* is the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, whom *sayyeda* Aisha described as “the *Qur’an* walking” – meaning that the Final Messenger and Best of Creation embodied the *Qur’an*’s guidance and teachings. There was no contradiction between what he said and what he did.

The Prophet Muhammad said that affirming the *shahada* – that is, affirming that, “There is no god, only Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah” – is easy on the tongue, but that much flows from this. We will now examine in a little more detail what flows from affirming the *shahada*, with particular reference to how these consequences affect social relations, resulting in either ease or difficulty, or at times a combination of both ease and difficulty simultaneously.

The Hadith Jibril

Anyone who accepts Islam embarks on acquiring an understanding of the meaning of what is recorded in the well-known Hadith Jibril:

‘Umar ibn al-Khattab said, “One day while we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, there appeared before us a man whose clothes were exceedingly white and whose hair was exceedingly black. No trace of travel could be seen on him and none of us knew him. He walked up and sat down in front of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Resting his knees against his and placing the palms of his hands on his thighs, he said, ‘O Muhammad, tell me about *Islam*.’ The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, ‘Islam is to testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; to establish the prayer; to pay the zakat; to fast Ramadan; and to make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to do so.’ He said, ‘You have spoken the truth,’ and we were amazed at him asking him and then saying that he had spoken the truth. He said, ‘Then tell me about *Iman*.’ He said, ‘It is to believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in the Decree, both its good and its evil.’ He said, ‘You have spoken

5 *Qur’an* : 2.2

the truth.’ He said, ‘Then tell me about *Ihsan*.’ He said, ‘It is to worship Allah as though you see Him for while you do not see Him, He sees you.’ He said, ‘Then tell me about the Hour.’ He said, ‘The one asked about it knows no more about it than the asker.’ He said, ‘Then tell me about its signs.’ He said, ‘That a slave girl will give birth to her mistress and that you will see barefooted, destitute herdsmen competing in constructing lofty buildings.’ Then he left, but I stayed for a while. Then the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, ‘Umar, do you know who the questioner was?’ I said, ‘Allah and His Messenger know best.’ He said, ‘It was Jibril [the angel Gabriel] who came to teach you your life-transaction.’”⁶

Whoever reads this *hadith* and reflects on its meanings is inevitably reminded not only of what acts of worship of Allah are obligatory for all Muslims, but also of how vast the ocean of existence is, both in the Seen and in the Unseen – and accordingly how vast an undertaking seeking knowledge and understanding of this ocean is. This realisation fills the heart with awe of the beauty and fear of the majesty of the One Who created all of this – and in turn the impact of this realisation, accompanied by the effects of taking on the obligatory acts of worship, is visible in the demeanour and behaviour of the one who sincerely affirms the *shahada* and acts on what flows from this.

It is because of the immensity of this inward realisation that anyone who seeks to worship only Allah becomes recognisable immediately – and this often causes alarm in the hearts of those who worship other-than-Allah, not only in their being and how they express themselves, but also in what happens when the time comes to do the prayer:

There are many examples of new Muslims who meet with immediate rejection from non-Muslim members of their family, or friends or employers when they seek to do the obligatory prayer in its time. This is because this simple act of worship inevitably confronts non-Muslims with the question as to whom or what do they worship. If they feel uncomfortable with this simple reminder, then they usually express their discomfort in words and actions: some will say, “Well, you’re not doing the prayer in my house!” or, “You do not have permission to do the prayer in this work place. You are employed to work, not to pray!” and even, “Go back to where you came from!” which indicates the popular misconception that Islam is only for foreigners and not for ‘PLUs’ – ‘people like us’.

I know of one family who went so far as to have their son sectioned and placed in a mental institution and drugged up to his eyeballs so that he could be ‘cured’ of his mental illness of accepting Islam. He managed to escape and came to me for advice. I said, “Go back immediately and apologise for any inconvenience you have caused – and they are bound to conclude that only a sane person is capable of such a responsible response and will release you,” which is what happened. I know of employees who after years of enjoying a good work record were summarily dismissed after starting to wear the hijab or fasting during Ramadan, even though neither of these harmless and in fact beneficial actions affected their ability to do their work.

Even if there is a secular law which purports to recognise and guarantee the human right of the freedom to choose one's belief and religion and to manifest this belief in practice whether alone or with others, this does not prevent people from being discriminated against because they are Muslims – especially when that human right has not been secured by secondary legislation which makes provision for a remedy including compensation being payable in those situations in which a Muslim suffers financial loss or injury to feelings as a result of being discriminated against on the grounds of his or her religion.

Indeed some new Muslims are so apprehensive about how their family or employers will react to their embracing Islam that they go to great lengths to hide their Islam, fearing that they will be disowned or dismissed. Although Allah says, “Do not fear them – fear Me if you are *muminun*,”⁷ this is not always easy for a new Muslim who may have entered the *deen* in a fragile state and whose fear of creation and fear of Allah are intermingled and not yet based on knowledge and understanding.

In contrast, I know of parents or families who immediately wanted to know more about Islam when they became aware that their adult ‘child’ or sibling had embraced Islam and who were happy to start cooking *halal* food for them – and some of whom ended up embracing Islam as well, along with other members of the family. I also know of a warehouseman who constructed a makeshift prayer space in one corner of a warehouse, using cardboard cartons to form a makeshift wall around it, so that the Muslims working there could do the prayer without being disturbed.

Similarly, I know of families who insisted on giving one of their deceased members who had accepted Islam a Christian burial or cremating the dead body, even though their child's or sibling's wish to have a Muslim burial had been made clearly known before his or her death took place. This situation sometimes results in a tug-of-war between the non-Muslim family members and members of the local Muslim community who wish to provide the deceased member of *their* community with a Muslim burial.

In contrast, I also know of families who have immediately contacted the local Muslim community in order to ensure that the wishes of one of their deceased members who has died after embracing Islam to have a Muslim burial are respected and implemented.

Underlying these varying responses is the state of the hearts of the people involved. If a person has a believing heart, he or she will demonstrate a degree of recognition and understanding or a desire to understand. If a person has an unbelieving heart they will demonstrate a degree of hostility and rejection and a desire not to understand.

And it is in the context of these impulses either to understand or not to understand that another set of problems emerges: Both those who accept and those who reject inevitably have questions to ask the new Muslim – whether they be friendly questions or hostile questions – and, especially in the early days, the new Muslim may not be able to answer these questions accurately or adequately, although by having been asked them, he or she will be given the incentive to ascertain the answers and so pushed by Allah further along his or her new learning curve.

7 *Qur'an* : 3.157

This is why it is very important for a new Muslim to have the benefit of the company of someone who can teach him or her about the *deen*. When a person says the *shahada* with sincerity and takes on the *deen*, this does not mean that he or she is immediately granted a complete and reliable all-encompassing knowledge of what this entails, both intellectually and existentially. All of this has to be learned: what is *Tawhid* and how best to approach understanding of *Tawhid*; what is the life story of the Prophet Muhammad and his first community, may Allah be pleased with all of them; how you do *ghusl* and *wudu*; how you do the prayer and what the different forms of the prayer are; how you fast and what the different fasts are; what the requirements regarding the payment, collection and distribution of *zakat* are; how you do the *hajj*; what is *halal* and what is *haram* and what is *makruh*; what is the difference between *fard* and *wajib* and *mustahhab* and *mamnu'a* and *mufsida* and *sunnah* and *nawafil*.

Underlying these areas of essential knowledge (which are necessary for every adult Muslim, both male and female) is the need for the new Muslim to begin learning Arabic with understanding of its usage and meanings and the difference between classical Arabic and colloquial Arabic. This begins first and foremost with learning what is necessary to be able to do the obligatory *salat*, but then it expands into every aspect of being able to recite and understand the *Qur'an* and to acquire knowledge of the *hadith* and the *sunnah* – and in this process there gradually manifests a different reference framework which, as it is acquired and understood, makes it possible to understand the nature of existence and what Allah has prescribed for His slaves in a completely different way to the reference framework to which the new Muslim was accustomed before he or she embraced Islam in his or her time of *jahiliyya*, that is, the time of ignorance and arrogance before knowledge is granted by the overflowing generosity of Allah.

This new endeavour is not completed in a few weeks, or months, or years, or even decades – it takes up all that remains of the new Muslim's lifetime and for some new Muslims the prospect of a lifetime's study can be overwhelming. Learning Arabic can be daunting for some new Muslims. Some find it hard going and some take to it like a fish to water. The secret is not to make acquiring knowledge a burden, but rather to approach the matter as a tasty meal which you enjoy most when you are hungry and do not eat too much at one sitting and share the food in good company.

Again, if the new Muslim does not have a good teacher, this can be very problematical.

It sometimes happens that a person embraces Islam and everyone is delighted and there is a big celebration – and then he or she subsequently finds him or her self apparently abandoned, in the sense that the Muslims whom he or she knows are busy with their families and their work and take what they know for granted and do not fully appreciate just how much learning is now necessary for the new Muslim – who may find him or her self feeling inundated and out of place and drifting back into his or her previous familiar lifestyle and company, even to the point, in the case of some, of renouncing his or her Islam and coming up with forty-nine reasons why, all of them good ones, all of them lies.

This is why the Prophet Muhammad said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that we should be careful about the company we keep, because we become like the company we keep. The one who keeps the company of a perfumer smells of perfume. The one who keeps the company of a blacksmith smells of smoke and soot. The one who keeps the company of drug addicts becomes a drug addict. The one who keeps the company of the *muminun* becomes addicted to worshipping Allah.

It is perhaps because of this truth that those who make *hijra* from ignorance to knowledge are most successful when granted a helper to guide them and teach them. This may happen naturally as part of their journey to Islam, or it may take place when they arrive at the doors of Islam and are welcomed in by a close-knit community of Muslims who are guided by a knowledgeable teacher, for example in a local community *masjid* or a *madrassa* or a *zawiya* or a *khanqa* or a *tekke*.

It is in this best of learning situations (in which it is important that the guide of the community has the requisite *idhn* (permission) or *ijaza* (authority) from his or her teacher (which are ultimately from Allah and His Messenger, *salla'llahu alayhi wa salam*), that the new Muslim discovers that the main social problem to be faced is not 'out there' but in fact 'in here', within his or her very own self (*nafs*) – that illusory solidification of events obscuring a light (*ruh*) – which, until it is purified, can be such a trouble-maker!

The Prophet Muhammad said that the *mumin* is the mirror of the *mumin* – and in a close-knit community pressure-cooker-like situation, the new Muslim finds him or her self surrounded by mirrors – in which all of his or her faults are mirrored! When faced with such unexpected reflections, often the new Muslim's first impulse is to criticise and verbally attack these mirrors – but a sincere and honest person will recognise what is happening, especially with the help of his or her companions, and deal with the faults in his or her self that have become apparent via the reflections in these mirrors.

Although this can be not particularly pleasant, after an initially difficult while, it becomes a pleasure to sit in such company – and not a trial! As Allah says in the *Qur'an*:

Fighting is prescribed for you even if it is hateful to you.

It may be that you hate something when it is good for you
and it may be that you love something when it is bad for you.

Allah knows and you do not know.⁸

As the Prophet observed, the greatest fight is the fight against the self – and in his or her early days as a Muslim the seeker has to learn not to mistakenly misdirect this fight away from the self and against others, but rather to grasp that the struggle is not to struggle!

While on the subject of fighting, it is appropriate to consider how distorted media depictions of Islam and Muslims influence people's perceptions of what Islam entails and who Muslims are – and how these are often utilised by the unscrupulous and the ignorant as ammunition to attack Muslims, whether physically or verbally. The new Muslim has to learn how to deal with these distortions and how to deflect personal attacks on him or her which can often take place in a social setting when least expected.

Perhaps the most blatant example of such attacks is when the new Muslim is accused of glorifying or supporting or not condemning the murder of innocent civilians in terrorist attacks. It is important for the new Muslim to be able to analyse and unpack these insinuations by asserting clearly that just because thousands of innocent Muslim civilians in one part of the world have been wiped out with laser precision in the name of establishing peace, this does not entitle or justify anyone to murder innocent civilians in another part of the world as an act of ‘retaliation’ – and that as with all civilised legal systems, the *Shari’a* of Islam does not permit anyone to take the law into their own hands: if someone has murdered someone else, then the murderer (and anyone else who ordered or assisted him or her in committing the murder) should be identified, charged and given a fair trial in a court of law in which the evidence will be presented and considered and assessed carefully before a verdict is reached and judgment is given and implemented. Whoever asserts that the murder of innocent civilians is permitted in Islam is misinformed and misguided and has gone out of the *deen* and has strayed far from its middle way.

It need hardly be said that the new Muslim must be wary of being persuaded to follow any extremist ideology which is being peddled in the name of Islam or being misrepresented as Islam – and again, the best protection against such deviations and ending up in bad company is having a good teacher and the company of fellow seekers of knowledge who are studying with that teacher.

Another strong influence that is made easily available with the assistance of modern technology via the media and the internet is music, which comes in many forms. Most new Muslims were accustomed to listen to music before they embraced Islam and it is not helpful to suddenly tell them that listening to any kind of music is completely forbidden by the teachings of Islam, especially when some of them may well have arrived at the gates of Islam by means of listening to certain kinds of music.

The advice of Imam Al-Ghazali is most helpful in this respect: if the music makes you forget Allah, it is *haram*, and if the music reminds you of Allah it is *halal*. I would add to this that the best love songs are those which apply to all aspects of love, whether it be love of wealth, or love of a sweetheart, or love of family, or love of the Prophet Muhammad, *salla’llahu alayhi wa salam*, or love of Allah. This means that these songs can be either *halal* or *haram* for you depending on what your heart loves. For example, the music that is played during the *sama’* in which the followers of Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi do *tawaf* of their own hearts as they spin round the still point of the turning world is *halal*, since Allah said on the tongue of the Prophet Muhammad in the well-known *hadith qudsi*: “The heavens and the earth cannot contain Me, but the heart of the *mumin* contains me.”⁹

All Muslims have been enjoined by the *Qur’an* and the Prophet Muhammad to seek useful knowledge – knowledge that benefits – and to avoid accumulating useless information; and the Prophet Muhammad said that knowledge is the lost property of the *mumin*, who can pick it up wherever he or she finds it – so the new Muslim who is sincere is always on the lookout for this lost property, which often appears where he or she least expects!

9 *Ihya’ Ulum ad-Deen*, Volume 3, Imam Al-Ghazali

Since the *deen* is concerned with the purification and illumination of the heart, inevitably dirt and impurities that have been buried deep within rise to the surface and are expelled. The Prophet Muhammad described doing the obligatory prayers as being like washing the heart five times a day – and as one wise man observed, “It all comes out in the wash.” One such impurity that is washed out is the bad habit that has been renounced on the tongue but has remained hidden in the persona – so that there comes a time when what was being repressed unexpectedly manifests and rears its ugly head.

A common example of this phenomenon in the ‘western’ European and American context is that of a person who was brought up as a strict christian in a punishing ‘bible-bashing’ way. In the course of his or her journey of discovery which led to the gates of Islam, he or she probably rejected this religious education, not only because of the manner in which it was imparted, but also because of some of its inherent contradictions, such as the belief that a part of the One indivisible God took on the form of a man who had a human mother and was put to death, while at the same time remaining the One God Who has no beginning and no end, Who has not given birth and was not born, Who never sleeps or dies and Who sustains the heavens and the earth uninterruptedly.

All of this before accepting Islam conditioning may seem to be part of the distant past, but then as the new Muslim begins to acquire knowledge, he or she may suddenly find him or her self figuratively bashing people over the head with the *Qur’an* and the *Hadith* in a zealous attempt to impart his or her new found knowledge to others. Even when realisation dawns that this way of going about sharing knowledge is a manifestation of the way in which he or she was educated as a christian and that it is Allah who exercises lordship over His creation – not him or her – it may still take a while before this over enthusiastic approach fades and the middle way which involves not going to extremes is established.

Another surprise that awaits the new Muslim is having to deal with *shaytan* – and we seek refuge in Allah the Hearing the Knowing from the accursed *shaytan*. Allah tells us in the *Qur’an* that *shaytan* is clearly our enemy. In his last *khutba* on the Farewell Hajj, the Prophet warned against *shaytan* and said that he has lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray in big things, so beware of following him in small things.

The *Qur’an* confirms that, contrary to Christian belief, *shaytan* is not a fallen angel (which is another contradiction, since by definition an angel cannot fall), but rather a disobedient *jinn* whose biggest mistake involved his asserting, “I am better than him.”

Many new Muslims did not pay much attention to *shaytan* and his followers before they embraced Islam – either they thought that ascribing existence to *shaytan* was part of a primitive belief system from a bygone age, or perhaps they thought that *shaytan* does not even exist – and so having taken the momentous step to commit to embracing Islam fully, the new Muslim then finds that *shaytan* is fully committed to trying to trick or persuade him or her to break his or her contract with Allah – and that it is often *shaytan* who is the trouble-maker, rather than the person who has been fooled or tricked by him.

Allah says in the *Qur'an* that the plan of *shaytan* is always weak and that he will have no power over Allah's sincere slaves, but nevertheless, any approaches from this quarter have to be seen for what they are and neutralised robustly, whether they come from outward situations or from inward whisperings, or from a combination of both.

Allah says in the *Qur'an*:

Do people imagine that they will be left to say,
'We have *iman*,' and will not be tested? ¹⁰

Again, this is why it is so important to keep good company – because a good teacher is able to distinguish between the impulses of the self which are prompted by the whisperings of *shaytan* on the one hand – and on the other hand, the genuine promptings that spring from the heart to do what is pleasing to Allah. In this process, the new Muslim learns to guard the tongue and his or her private parts:

Malik related to me from Zayd ibn Aslam from 'Ata ibn Yasar that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Whomever Allah protects from the evil of two things will enter the Garden." A man said, "Messenger of Allah, do not tell us!" The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was silent. Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, repeated what he had said the first time. The man said to him, "Do not tell us Messenger of Allah!" The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was silent. Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said the same thing again. The man said, "Do not tell us Messenger of Allah!" Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said the same thing again. Then the man began to say what he had said previously and a man at his side silenced him. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Whomever Allah protects from the evil of two things will enter the Garden. They are what is between his jaws and what is between his legs, what is between his jaws and what is between his legs, what is between his jaws and what is between his legs." ¹¹

Thus the new Muslim learns, but perhaps with greater recognition and understanding than before, that in fact he or she has exactly the same enemies as everyone else:

Ahmad ibn Amir, may Allah be pleased with him, said, 'You have four enemies:

- Shaytan : and his weapons are a full belly – and his prison is hunger.
- Desire : and its weapon is speech – and it is imprisoned by silence.
- This world : whose weapon is to meet people – and it is imprisoned by retreat.
- The self : whose weapon is sleep – and it is imprisoned by sleeplessness. ¹²

10 *Qur'an* : 29.2

11 *Al-Muwatta* of Imam Malik: 56.5.11

12 *The Basic Research* by Shaykh Ahmad ibn 'Ajiba, p. 219

In the end times in which we now find ourselves, the new Muslim has to be prepared for their trials and tribulations. It is not long before the new Muslim discovers that as well as his or her embracing Islam being the best thing that has ever happened in his or her life, at times, as foretold by the Prophet, trying to live as a Muslim is like handling hot coals: Muslims are being persecuted and slaughtered in many countries and many have been forced to become refugees and flee westwards, bringing Islam with them, arriving on the shores of lands in which Islam is yet to be established – and finding that not all man-made laws are just or benign. Thus for example most secular legal systems sometimes make *haram* what Allah has permitted and sometimes make *halal* what Allah has forbidden: sexual promiscuity and sexual deviation are widespread and usury (*riba*) is an inescapable fact of life in almost every part of the world. These practices impact and taint everyone's lives, including those who do not directly participate in them, and accordingly they affect almost everyone, whether they live in 'modern' cities or dwell in distant rain forests – and whatever their beliefs, religions or ways of life may be:

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar said: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came to us and said, "O *Muhajirun*, you may be afflicted by five things – God forbid that you should live to see them. If fornication should become widespread, you should realise that this has never happened without new diseases befalling the people which their forebears never suffered. If people should begin to cheat in weighing out goods, you should realise that this has never happened without drought and famine befalling the people, and their rulers oppressing them. If people should withhold *zakat*, you should realise that this has never happened without the rain being stopped from falling – and were it not for the animals' sake, it would never rain again. If people should break their covenant with Allah and His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, you should realise that this has never happened without Allah sending an enemy against them to take some of their possessions by force. If the leaders do not govern according to the Book of Allah, you should realise that this has never happened without Allah making them into groups and making them fight one another."'¹³

Conclusion

We all witness these five things taking place around us and on our television and computer screens and we are all inescapably impacted by them – and yet in spite of all this, life goes on and nothing can stop it. When Allah loves someone, He tests them with hardship as a means of purification. No-one was tested more than the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and then the other Prophets, blessings and peace be on all of them, and then the *awliya* and then the *salihin*, may Allah be pleased with them, and then the *muminun* and *muslimun* – and so the new Muslim must be prepared for difficulties in his or her social life, remembering all the while that Allah has promised:

13 Ibn Majah, *Kitab al-Fitan*, 4019, 2/1332

Allah does not impose on any self
any more than it can stand.¹⁴

And:

The Companions of the Fire
and the Companions of the Garden
are not the same.

It is the Companions of the Garden who are the victors.¹⁵

No-one can bring you to Islam and no-one can take you away from Islam – and one of the inevitable consequences of embracing Islam is that in time a new Muslim becomes a well-travelled Muslim, inwardly and outwardly, accustomed to remembering Allah and worshipping Allah more and more in accordance with what Allah in His wisdom has prescribed for his slaves, so that insh'Allah when the time comes, sooner or later, to leave this world, insh'Allah he or she does so in a state in which he or she is pleased with Allah and pleasing to Allah:

'O self at rest and at peace,
return to your Lord, well-pleasing and well-pleased!
Enter among My slaves!
Enter My Garden.'¹⁶



14 *Qur'an* : 2.286

15 *Qur'an* : 59.20

16 *Qur'an* : 89.28–30

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

- Allah* : The Lord of all the worlds and what is in them. *Allah* has ninety-nine Names all of which are from and within the One, *Allah*. *Allah*, the supreme and mighty Name, indicates the One, the Existent, the Creator, the Worshipped, the Lord of the Universe. *Allah* is the First without beginning and the Last without end. He is the Outwardly Manifest and the Inwardly Hidden. There is no existent except Him and there is only Him in existence.
- akhirah* : what is on the other side of death; the world after this world in the realm of the Unseen.
- 'alim* : (plural: *'ulama*) a Muslim who has sound knowledge of the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith*, and accordingly of the *Shari'a* and the *Sunna*, and who puts what he knows into action.
- amir : one who commands and makes the final decision; the source of authority in any given situation. When and wherever there is a group of Muslims, it is the *Sunna* to choose an *Amir* from amongst themselves.
- Ansar* : the 'Helpers', the people of Madina who welcomed and aided the Prophet and the *Muhajirun*, may the blessings and peace of Allah be on him and on his family and his Companions.
- 'arif* : gnostic, someone who has *ma'rifa*, direct knowledge of Allah.
- awliya* : the plural of *wali*; the friends of Allah, and those who have been granted the greatest knowledge of Allah, which is *ma'rifa*.
- deen* : the life transaction, the way you live and behave towards *Allah*. It is submission and obedience to a particular system of rules and practices. Literally it means the debt or exchange situation between two parties, in this usage the Creator and the created, or as some say between the conditioned and the unconditioned, the limited and the limitless, or the many and the One. *Allah* says in the *Qur'an* that surely the *deen* with *Allah* is *Islam*. The *deen* of Allah and the Muslim community is *Islam* but every society and cultural grouping have a *deen* which they follow.
- dhikr* : remembrance and invocation of Allah. All worship of Allah is *dhikr*. Its foundation is declaring the Unity of Allah, prostrating before Allah, fasting, giving to the needy, and doing the hajj, the pilgrimage to Makka. Recitation of the *Qur'an* is its heart, and invocation of the Single Name, Allah, its end.
- du'a* : making supplication to Allah.
- dunya* : this world, not as a cosmic phenomenon, but as it is imagined, inwardly and outwardly. It has been compared to a bunch of grapes which appears to be in reach but which, when you stretch out for it, disappears.
- fard* : what is obligatory in the *Shari'ah*. This is divided into *fard 'ayn*, which is what is obligatory on every adult Muslim; and *fard kifaya*, which is what is obligatory on at least one of the adults in any particular Muslim community.

- fiqh* : the formal study of knowledge, especially the practice of Islam. It is the science of the application of *Shari'a*.
- fitan* : the plural of *fitna*, meaning civil strife, sedition, schism, trial, temptation.
- fitra* : the first nature, the natural, primal condition of mankind in harmony with nature, with the self inwardly, and with existence outwardly.
- fuqaha* : the scholars of *fiqh*, who by virtue of their knowledge can give an authoritative legal opinion or judgement which is firmly based on what is in the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* and which is in accordance with the *Shari'a* and the *Sunna*.
- furqan* : the faculty of being able to discriminate between what is *halal* and what is *haram*, between what is valuable and what is worthless, between what is fruitful and what is unfruitful, between what is good and what is bad, both for your self and for others. One of the names of the *Qur'an* is *Al-Furqan*. To embody the *Sunna* and follow the *Shari'a* is *furqan*.
- ghayb* : the Unseen.
- ghusl* : washing the entire body with water in accordance with the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad, may the blessings and peace of Allah be on him. It is necessary to have a *ghusl* on embracing Islam, after sexual intercourse or seminal emission, at the end of menstruation, and after child birth – and before being buried when your body is washed for you. It is necessary to be in *ghusl* and in *wudu* before you do the *salat* or hold a copy of the *Qur'an*. *Ghusl* is a purification both inwardly and outwardly.
- hadith* : the written record of what the Prophet Muhammad said or did, may the blessings and peace of Allah be on him, preserved intact from source, through a reliable chain of human transmission, person to person.
- hadith qudsi* : the written record of those words of Allah on the tongue of the Prophet Muhammad, may the blessings and peace of Allah be on him, which are not a part of the revelation of the *Qur'an*, preserved intact from source, through a reliable chain of human transmission, person to person.
- hajj* : the greater pilgrimage to the *Ka'ba*, the House of Allah in Makka, and the performance of the rites of pilgrimage in the protected area which surrounds the *Ka'ba*. The *hajj* begins on the 8th of Dhu'l-Hijja, the twelfth lunar month of the Muslim calendar. The *hajj* is one of the pillars of Islam, and is a purification outwardly and inwardly.
- halal* : what is permitted by the *Shari'a*.
- haram* : what is forbidden by the *Shari'a*.
- Haram*: A protected area. There are two protected areas, known as the *Haramayn*, in which certain behaviour is forbidden and other behaviour necessary. These are the areas around the *Ka'ba* in *Makka* and around the Prophet's Mosque in *Madina*, in which is his tomb, may the blessings and peace of Allah be on him.

- hijab* : The Arabic word *hijab* literally means a veil or a curtain. Its verbal root means ‘to cover’, ‘to shut out’. The word is commonly used by Muslims to refer to a woman’s head wear – and is also used in a broader sense to indicate the metaphysical. For example, it is said, “The creation is a veil which hides the Creator, so if you find the creation beautiful, imagine how beautiful the One behind the veil is!”
- hijra* : to emigrate in the way of Allah to a place where it is possible to follow the way of Muhammad, may the blessings and peace of Allah be on him, and establish the deen of Islam as a social reality. Islam takes its dating from the first Hijra of the Prophet Muhammad, from Makka to Madina, in 622 CE.
- hudud* : the limits; the boundary limits which separate what is *halal* from what is *haram*, as defined by Allah.
- ‘Id* : a festival. There are two main festivals in the Muslim year, on the first day of which ‘Id prayers are prayed.
- ‘Id al-Adha* : a four day festival at the time of the *hajj*. The *‘Id* of the (greater) Sacrifice, it starts on the 10th day of Dhu’l-Hijjah, the day that the pilgrims sacrifice their animals, remembering the sacrifice which the Prophet Ibrahim, on him be peace, was prepared to make, and the sacrifice which he made instead.
- ‘Id al-Fitra* : the festival at the end of the month of fasting, Ramadan, held on the 1st of the month of Shawwal.
- idhn* : permission or authority, either to teach, or to fight *jihad* in the way of Allah. *Idhn* is from Allah and His Messenger, may the blessings and peace of Allah be on him.
- ihsan* : the inward state of the *mumin* who is constantly aware of being in the Presence of *Allah*, and who acts accordingly. *Ihsan* is to worship *Allah* as though you see Him, knowing that although you do not see Him, He sees you.
- ijaza* : a certification, by a teacher that a particular student is qualified to teach a particular subject or to transmit a specific book or collection of *hadith*.
- ijtihad* : exercising personal judgement; the faculty of deciding the best course of action in a situation, which is not expressly referred to in the *Qur’an* and the *Hadith*, and then choosing a course of action which is close to the *Sunna* and in accord with the *Shari’a*. Very useful when dealing with technology.
- imam* : the one who leads the communal prayers. In the first Muslim community of Madina al-Munawara, the *Amir* was the *Imam*.
- iman* : trust in *Allah* and acceptance of His Messenger, may the blessings and peace of *Allah* be on him. *Iman* grows in the heart of the one who follows the way of *Islam*. *Iman* is to believe in *Allah*; His Angels; His Books; His Messengers; the Last Day and the Fire and the Garden; and that everything, both good and bad, is by the Decree of Allah. Thus *iman* is the inner knowledge and certainty in the heart which gives you *taqwa* and *tawba* and the yearning to know more.

- Islam* : the Prophetic guidance brought by the Prophet Muhammad, may the blessings and peace of *Allah* be on him, for this age for the people and *jinn* who desire peace in this world, the Garden in the next world, and knowledge and worship of *Allah* in both worlds. The five pillars of *Islam* are the affirmation of the *shahada* (the affirmation that there is no god except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah); doing the *salat* (prayer); fasting during the month of *Ramadan*; paying the *zakat* (a tax on surplus wealth); and doing the *hajj* (the pilgrimage to Makka) if you are able. The peak of Islam is *jihad*. A person enters Islam by saying the *shahada* in front of at least two witnesses, and having a *ghusl* either directly before or after this.
- jahiliyya* : the time of arrogance and ignorance which precedes the time when the way of *Islam* is established as a social reality. Anyone who does not have wisdom suffers from *jahiliyya*.
- Jannah* : the Garden, Paradise, the final destination and resting place of the *Muslims* in the *akhirah*, once the Day of Reckoning is past. *Jannah* is accurately described in great detail in the *Qur'an* and in the *Hadith*.
- Jibril* : the angel Gabriel, peace be on him, who brought the revelation of the *Qur'an* to the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.
- jihad* : struggle, particularly fighting in the way of Allah to establish Islam.
- jinn* : beings made of smokeless fire who live in the Unseen. Some *jinn* are *mumin*, some are *kafir*, some are the followers of *shaytan*, and we seek refuge in Allah from the accursed *shaytan*.
- Ka'ba* : the House of Allah, in Makka, originally built by the Prophet Ibrahim, peace be on him, and rebuilt with the help of the Prophet Muhammad, may the blessings and peace of Allah be on him. The *Ka'ba* is the focal point which all Muslims face when doing the *salat*. This does not mean that Allah lives inside the *Ka'ba*, nor does it mean that the Muslims worship the *Ka'ba*. It is Allah whom the Muslims worship, and Allah is not contained or confined in any form or place or time or concept.
- kafir* : (plural *kafirun*) the one who denies the Existence of *Allah* and who rejects His Prophets and Messengers, and who accordingly has no peace or trust in this life, and a place in the Fire in the next life. The opposite is believer or *mu'min*. Shaykh 'Abd'al-Qadir writes, '*Kufr* means to cover up reality: *kafir* is one who does so. The *kafir* is the opposite of the *mu'min*. The point is that everyone knows 'how it is' – only it suits some people to deny it and pretend it is otherwise, to behave as if we were going to be here for ever. This is called *kufr*. The condition of the *kafir* is therefore one of neurosis, because of his inner knowing. He 'bites his hand in rage' but will not give in to his inevitable oncoming death.' (*Quranic Tawhid*. Diwan Press. 1981).
- khalif* : the Arabic is *khalifa*, (pl. *khulafa*); Caliph, someone who stands in for someone else, in this case the leader of the Muslim community, although it

is sometimes used to describe the deputy of someone in a higher position of authority. In the first Muslim community of Madina al-Munawara, the *Khalif* was the *Amir* was the *Imam*.

- khanqa* : a *zawiya*, a place where seekers of Allah live and meet.
- khutba* : a speech, and in particular a standing speech given by the *Imam* before the *jumu'a* prayer and after the two *'Id* prayers.
- kitab* : book, a term usually used to refer to the divinely revealed *Qur'an*, and sometimes used to refer to the books divinely revealed to the earlier Prophets, peace be on all of them.
- kufr* : disbelief, to cover up the truth, to reject Allah and refuse to believe that Muhammad is His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.
- madrasa* : a traditional Muslim place of learning based on memorisation and study of the *Qur'an* and the *hadith*.
- makruh* : abominable, reprehensible, disapproved of, but not unlawful in the *Shari'a*.
- malaika* : (plural of *malak*) the angels, who are made of light and glorify Allah unceasingly. They are neither male nor female. They do not need food or drink. They are incapable of wrong action and disobeying Allah and they do what Allah commands them to do. Everyone has two recording angels continually with them who write down their intentions and actions and none of this escapes the knowledge of Allah.
- mamnua* : what is prohibited in acts of worship in the *Shari'a*.
- ma'rifa* : gnosis, the highest knowledge of Allah possible for a man or woman. It is to directly witness the Light of the Names and Attributes of Allah manifested in the heart.
- masjid* : a place of *sajda* (prostration), a mosque.
- mawlana* : 'our master', a term of respect.
- mizan* : balance, in life, inwardly and outwardly. *Mizan* is also used to indicate the means by which actions and intentions will be measured on the Last Day. Shaykh 'Abd'al-Qadir al-Murabit writes, 'Al-Mizan. Its meaning is the justice and harmony of all creation and therefore of time/space and therefore of us and events. It is the meaning of the Garden and the Fire, of the balance between the matrices, it is what was called in the ancient Tao-form of Islam in China, yin/yang. It is the secret of the contrary Names. It is what we are born and die on, and which turns our acts and intentions into realities to be weighed on the Day of the Balance.' (Qur'anic Tawhid. Diwan Press. 1981).
- mufsida* : what invalidates acts of worship in the *Shari'a*.
- Muhajirun* : Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who accepted Islam in Makka and made *hijra* to Madina.
- muhsin* : the Muslim who has *ihsan*, and who accordingly only gives reality to the Real, *Allah*. Only the *muhsin* really knows what *Tawhid* is. Shaykh 'Abd'al-

Qadir once said, 'The difference between the *kafir* and the *muslim* is vast. The difference between the *muslim* and the *mumin* is greater still. The difference between the *mumin* and the *muhsin* is immeasurable,' not only in inward state, but also in outward action.

- mumin* : (plural *muminun*) the Muslim who has *iman*, who trusts in *Allah* and accepts His Messenger, may the blessings and peace of *Allah* be on him, and for whom the next world is more real than this world. The *mumin* longs for the Garden so much, that this world seems like the Fire by comparison and feels like a prison.
- munafiq* : (plural, *munafiqun*); a hypocrite, a person who outwardly professes *Islam* on the tongue, but inwardly rejects *Allah* and His Messenger, may the blessings and peace of *Allah* be on him, and who sides with the *kafirun* against the *muminun*. The deepest part of the Fire is reserved for the *munafiqun*.
- Munkar and Nakir* : the two angels who question your *ruh* in the grave after your body has been buried, asking, "Who is your Lord? Who is your Prophet? What is your Book? What was your *Deen*?"
- mushrikun* : the idol worshippers, those who commit shirk.
- muslim* : one who follows the Way of *Islam*, doing what is obligatory and avoiding what is forbidden in the *Shari'a*, keeping within the limits prescribed by *Allah*, and embodying as much of the *Sunna* as he or she is able, through study of the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* followed by action. A Muslim is, by definition, one who is safe and sound, at peace in this world, and guaranteed the Garden in the next world.
- mustahab* : what is recommended, but not obligatory, in acts of worship in the *Shari'a*.
- nabi* : a Prophet; a man rightly guided by Allah and sent by Allah to guide others. Altogether there have been one hundred and twenty-four thousand Prophets in the history of mankind. The last Prophet before the end of the world, the Seal of the Prophets, is the Prophet Muhammad, may the blessings and peace of Allah be on him.
- nafs* : the illusory experiencing self; you as you think you are. When the *nafs* is impure, it is an illusory solidification of events obscuring a light, the *ruh*. When it has been completely purified, the *nafs* is *ruh*.
- Nar* : the Fire of Hell, the final destination and place of torment of the *kafirun* and the *munafiqun* in the *akhira*, once the Day of Reckoning is past. Some of those Muslims who neglected what is obligatory in the *Shari'a* and who did grave wrong action without making *tawba* will spend some time in the Fire before being allowed to enter the Garden, depending on the Forgiveness of *Allah* – Who forgives every wrong action except *shirk* if He wishes. *Nar* is accurately described in great detail in the *Qur'an* and in the *Hadith*.
- nawafil* : what is voluntary in acts of worship in the *Shari'a*.

- qabr* : the grave, experienced as a place of peace and light and space by the *ruh* of the *mu'min* who sees his or her place in the Garden in the morning and in the evening; and experienced as a place of torment and darkness and no space by the *ruh* of the *kafir* who sees his or her place in the Fire in the morning and in the evening. After death there is a period of waiting in the grave for the *ruh* until the Last Day arrives, when everyone who has ever lived will be brought back to life and gathered together. Their actions and intentions will be weighed in the Balance, and everyone will either go to the Garden or to the Fire, for ever.
- qibla* : direction. Everyone has a direction in life. The direction which the Muslims face when they do the prayer is towards the *Ka'ba* in Makka. This direction is what distinguishes the Muslims from everyone else, who have every other direction except the *qibla*.
- Qur'an* : the 'Recitation', the last Revelation from *Allah* to mankind and the *jinn* before the end of the world, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, may *Allah* bless him and grant him peace, through the angel Jibril, over a period of twenty-three years (beginning in 610 CE and ending in 632 CE), the first thirteen of which were spent in *Makka* and the last ten of which were spent in *Madina*. The *Qur'an* amends, encompasses, expands, surpasses and abrogates all the earlier revelations revealed to the earlier Messengers, peace be on all of them. The *Qur'an* is by far the greatest of all the miracles given to the Prophet Muhammad by *Allah*, for he was illiterate and could neither read nor write. The *Qur'an* is the uncreated word of *Allah*. The *Qur'an* still exists today exactly as it was originally revealed, without any alteration or change or addition or deletion. Whoever recites the *Qur'an* with courtesy and sincerity receives knowledge and wisdom, for it is the well of wisdom in this age.
- Ramadan* : one of the pillars of Islam. It is the ninth lunar month of the Muslim calendar during which all adult Muslims who are in good health fast from dawn to sunset each day. During the first third of the fast you taste Allah's Mercy; during the second third of the fast you taste Allah's Forgiveness; and during the last third of the fast you taste freedom from the Fire. The *Qur'an* was first revealed in the month of Ramadan during the Night of Power, which is one of the odd nights in the last third of Ramadan. The fast of Ramadan is a purification outwardly and inwardly.
- rasul* : a Messenger, a Prophet who has been given a revealed Book by Allah. Every Messenger was a Prophet, but not every Prophet was a Messenger.
- riba* : usury, which is forbidden, whatever form it takes, since it always involves obtaining something for nothing through exploitation.
- riba al-fadl* : this involves any unjustified excess in quantity in an exchange, for example, charging interest on lent money; or an exchange of goods of superior quality for more of the same kind of goods of inferior quality, for example, dates

of superior quality for dates of inferior quality in greater amount, which is forbidden.

- riba an-nasi'a* : this involves any unjustified delay in time in an exchange, for example, increasing the price of goods if payment is to be deferred; or a delay in transfer in an exchange of two quantities, even if they match in quantity and quality, for example in an exchange of 10 dirhams for 7 dinars which is only permitted if the exchange is hand to hand.
- ruh* : the spirit which gives life, formed from pure light; also the Angel Jibril.
- sadaqa* : voluntary charitable giving for the sake of Allah.
- salat* : the prayer, particularly the five daily obligatory prayers which constitute one of the pillars of Islam.
- salihin* : plural of *salih*, a developed man; by definition, one who is in the right place at the right time.
- salla'llahu alayhi wa salam* : may Allah bless him and grant him peace
– meaning the Prophet Muhammad.
- sama'* : listening to the teacher, hence it is direct transmission;
listening session, listening to songs about Allah, so that the heart may open.
- sayyedina* : 'our master', a term of respect.
- shahada* : bearing witness, particularly bearing witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. It is one of the pillars of Islam. It is also used to describe legal testimony in a court of law.
- shahid* : (plural *shuhud*), a witness.
- Shari'a* : *lit.* a road, an approach to a drinking place, a drinking place; the way of *Islam*, the way of Muhammad, may the blessings and peace of *Allah* be on him, the road which leads to knowledge of *Allah* and the Garden. Shaykh 'Abd'al-Qadir writes, 'It is the behaviour modality of a people based on the revelation of their Prophet. The last *Shari'a* in history has proved to be that of *Islam*. Its social modality abrogates all previous *shara'i* e.g. Navaho, Judaic, Vedic, Buddhic, etc. These *shara'i* however, continue until the arrival and confrontation takes place in that culture with the final and thus superior *Shari'a* – *Islam*. It is, being the last, therefore the easiest to follow, for it is applicable to the whole human race wherever they are.' (*Qur'anic Tawhid*. Diwan Press. 1981).
- shaykh* : an old man – an *'alim* or *'arif* who has knowledge of Allah and His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and His *deen* – the one who guides you from knowledge of your self to knowledge of your Lord.
- shaytan* : a devil, particularly the Devil, Iblis (Satan), may Allah curse him, who is one of the *jinn* who was and is too proud to obey Allah, and who encourages everyone else to be likewise. *Shaytan* is part of the creation of Allah, and we seek refuge in Allah from the evil that He has created.

- Shi'a* : lit. a party or faction, specifically the party who claim that 'Ali should have succeeded the Prophet as the first *khalif* and that the leadership of the Muslims rightfully belongs to his descendant.
- shirk* : the unforgivable wrong action of worshipping something or someone other than Allah or associating anything or anyone as a partner with *Allah*, that is, to worship what is other than *Allah*, including your self, your country, your universe and anything it contains. *Shirk* is the opposite of *Tawhid*. *Allah* says in the *Qur'an* that He will forgive any wrong action except *shirk*. Shaykh 'Abd'al-Qadir writes, 'Idol-worship means giving delineation to the Real. Encasing it in an object, a concept, a ritual, or a myth. This is called *shirk*, or association. Avoidance of *shirk* is the most radical element in the approach to understanding existence in *Islam*. It soars free of these deep social restrictions and so posits such a profoundly revolutionary approach to existence that it constitutes - and has done for fourteen hundred years - the most radical rejection of the political version of idolatry, statism. It is very difficult for programmed literates in this society to cut through to the clear tenets of *Islam*, for the Judaic and Christian perversions stand so strongly in the way either as, rightly, anathema, or else as ideals. The whole approach to understanding reality has a quite different texture than that known and defined in European languages, thus a deep insight into the structure of the Arabic language itself would prove a better introduction to the metaphysic than a philosophical statement. The uncompromising *tawhid* that is affirmed does not add on any sort of 'god-concept'. Nor does it posit an infra-god, a grund-god, even an over-god. Christian philosophers were so frightened by this position that when they met it, to stop people discovering the fantasy element in their trinitarian mythology they decided to identify it with pantheism in the hope of discrediting it. That they succeeded in this deception is an indication of how far the whole viewpoint has been kept out of reach of the literate savage society. Let it suffice here to indicate that there is no 'problem' about the nature of *Allah*. Nor do we consider it possible even to speak of it. No how, who, or what or why. It is not hedging the matter in mystery. It is simply asking the wrong questions. The knowledge of *Allah* is specifically a personal quest in which the radical question that has to be asked is not even 'Who am I?' but 'Where then are you going?' (*Qur'anic Tawhid*. Diwan Press. 1981).
- siddiq* : a man of truth; sincerity is his condition, not his adopted position.
- Sunna* : the form, the customary practice of a person or group of people. It has come to refer almost exclusively to the practice of the Messenger of *Allah*, Muhammad, may the blessings and peace of *Allah* be on him, but at the time that *Imam* Malik, may *Allah* be pleased with him, compiled *Al-Muwatta'*, meaning 'The Well-Trodden Path', there was no sense of setting the *Sunna* of the Prophet apart from the *Sunna* of *Madina*, so that the actions of its knowledgeable people were given even more weight than the behaviour of the Prophet related in isolated *Hadith*. The *Sunna* of the Prophet Muham-

mad and the first Muslim community of *Madina al-Munawara* is a complete behavioural science that has been systematically kept outside the learning framework of this society.

Sunni : the main body of Muslims, who recognise and accept the first four *khalifs*.

taqlid : in reference to *fiqh*, it means the following of previous authorities and the avoidance of *ijtihad*.

taqwa : awe of *Allah*, which inspires a person to be on guard against wrong action and eager for actions which please Him.

tawaf : circling the House of Allah, the *Ka'ba*.

tawba : turning away from wrong action to Allah and asking His Forgiveness, returning to correct action after error, turning to face the Real whereas before one turned one's back. One of the greatest acts of *tawba* is to abandon the *deen* of *kufr* and to embrace the *deen* of Islam. Your turning to Him is in reality His turning to you.

Tawhid : Unity in its most profound sense. *Allah* is One in His Essence and His Attributes and His Acts. The whole universe and what it contains is One unified event which in itself has no lasting reality. *Allah* is Real.

tayeb : good.

tekke : a Turkish *zawiya*.

'ulama : the plural of *'alim*; those who know. Allah says in the *Qur'an* that the *'ulama* are those who fear Allah.

Umma : the body of Muslims as one distinct Community.

'umra : the lesser pilgrimage to the *Ka'ba*, the House of Allah in Makka, and the performance of its rites in the protected area which surrounds the *Ka'ba*. It can be done at any time of the year.

wajib : what is necessary, but not obligatory, in acts of worship in the *Shari'a*.

wudu : washing the hands, mouth, nostrils, face, forearms, head, ears, and feet, with water, in accordance with the *Sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad, may the blessings and peace of Allah be on him, so as to be pure for prayer. You must already be in *ghusl* for *wudu* to be effective. You should ensure that your private parts and under-clothes are clean before doing *wudu*. Once you have done *wudu*, you remain in the state of *wudu* until it broken by: any of the conditions which make it necessary to have a *ghusl*; emission of impurities from the private parts – urine, faeces, wind, prostatic fluid, or other discharge; loss of consciousness by whatever means, usually by sleep or fainting; physical contact between man and woman where sexual pleasure is either intended or experienced; touching your penis with the inside of your hand or fingers; and leaving Islam. It is necessary to be in *ghusl* and in *wudu* to do the *salat*, and to hold the *Qur'an*. *Wudu* is a purification both outwardly and inwardly.

- yaqin* : certainty – it has three stages:
‘Ilm al-yaqin, knowledge of certainty.
‘Ayn al-yaqin, source of certainty.
Haqq al-yaqin, truth of certainty.
- The Raja of Mahmudabad defined them thus:
 You are told – there is a fire in the forest.
 You reach the fire in the forest and see it.
 You are the fire in the forest.
- Yawm al-Akhira* : the Day After – the end of the world, and thus the Last Day, when everyone who has ever lived will be given life again, gathered together, their actions and intentions weighed in the Balance, and their place in either the Garden or the Fire confirmed. *Yawm al-Akhira* is also referred to in the *Qur’an* as *Yawm ad-Deen*, the Day of the Life Transaction; *Yawm al- Ba’th*, the Day of Rising from the grave; *Yawm al- Hashr*, the Day of Gathering; *Yawm al-Qiyama*, the Day of Standing; *Yawm al- Mizan*, the Day of the Balance; and *Yawm al- Hisab*, the Day of Reckoning. That Day will either be the best day or the worst day of your life, depending on who you are and where you are going. The *Yawm al- Akhira* is accurately described in great detail in the *Qur’an* and in the *Hadith*.
- zakat* : one of the five pillars of Islam, the wealth tax obligatory on Muslims each year, usually payable in the form of one fortieth of surplus wealth which is more than a certain fixed minimum amount, called the *nisab*. *Zakat* is payable on accumulated wealth, merchandise, certain crops, certain livestock, and subterranean and mineral wealth, including gold and oil. As soon as it is collected it is redistributed to those in need, as defined in the *Qur’an* and in the *Hadith*. *Zakat* is a purification both outwardly and inwardly.
- zawiya* : a ‘corner’, small mosque, or religious retreat, often where the *shaykh* teaches.

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Amin

