



بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

The Light

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We welcome all scholarly contributions to The Light.

I Shall Love All Mankind.

The Call of the Messiah

by **Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad**



The Promised Messiah and *Mahdi*

(Editor's note: Any quotations from the Quran are translated from the author's explanations and are not literal translations of the verse quoted. This extract is from the English translation of a lecture he delivered in 1904 in Lahore, now in Pakistan, taken from the Lahore Ahmad-iyya publication 'Essence of Islam', p. 77 - 79 where The Promised Messiah his talk with the prophecies he made which came true.)

Signs of the Latter Age

There are hundreds of other prophecies which were fulfilled in their time. On one occasion, I informed Maulvi Hakim Nur-ud-Din that a son would be born to him who would have sores upon his body, and the prophecy was published in a book. Sometime afterwards the promised son was born, and he had the sores on his body as described in the prophecy. The Maulvi Sahib is present in this gathering, and everyone can question him as to the truth of this statement. On another occasion, Abdul Rahim Khan, one of the sons of Sardar Muhammad Ali Khan, Raees of Malerkotla, was afflicted with a serious disease and all hope of his life was lost. When I prayed for him to God, it was revealed to me that the boy would recover because of my intercession. So, like a kind and affectionate sympathiser, I prayed for him, and the disease was gone. Abdullah Khan, the second son of the same gentleman, also fell ill and his condition was so serious that death seemed to be certain. I prayed for him and was informed of his recovery by God, and he also recovered.

There are numerous other signs, and if I were to relate them all, this lecture would last for ten days. Hundreds of thousands of men bear testimony to the truth of these signs because they were shown before their eyes. I have collected one hundred and fifty of these in a book, "*Nazool ul Masih*" which will be published shortly. These signs are of various types. Some of them were manifested upon the heavens and others upon earth. Some related to my friends

while others were in connection with my enemies. Some affected myself, and my children and others have been manifested by God through my enemies without any intervention on my part. To the last class belongs a sign which was manifested through Maulvi Ghulam Dastgir of Qasur, who chose to publish in his book, "*Fateh Rahman*", a prayer against me stating that God would destroy whoever was a liar, first. After a few days passed, the Maulvi died and thus bore testimony to my truth. In addition to this, there are thousands of men who were informed of my truth through visions and who have thus accepted me. ([Return to contents](#))

The Satanic Verses

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satanic_Verses)

Mariz Sintaha,

PhD Student (2017-present)

(Disclaimer: Copied from the Yasir Kadhi's biography of the prophet (episode 16) which was summarised by his students Safwan Khan and Faizan. The video is also included at the end. (With little modification in bold.)

A western researcher, an orientalist, called Sir William first time coined the term 'satanic verses'. He wrote a large book about the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) in English. And he labelled the chapter the 'Satanic Verses'.

Before we begin, this controversy comes over whether this incident is authentic or not. And further how we understand this incident. So, we'll discuss the different versions of the story that exist. We will discuss three versions.

Version 1

This is the version reported in Bukhari, thus the most authentic. And it says in this hadith, that in the month of Ramadan (from ibn Ishaq), in the 5th year of the Hijra, the Prophet (S) recited Surah an-Najam in its entirety. It is a very powerful and eloquent surah. And when he finished the surah - the very last verse says: "prostrate to Allah and worship Him". The momentum built up, and the excitement built up, and the power of the Quran affected the entire

I Shall Love All Mankind.

congregation, Muslim and non-Muslim, such that when the Prophet (S) said "prostrate to Allah" the Muslims fell into *sajdah*¹, and the Quraysh were so emotional too that they too fell into *sajdah*. For the first time, Muslim and non-Muslim ALL united behind the Prophet (S). Except for Waleed ibn Mugira who put sand on his head and said basically "this is good enough for me". The point being is that everyone prostrated behind the Prophet (S). Fifteen *sahaba*² had emigrated to Abyssinia before this happened since their lives were at risk by Quraish. Everyone falling in Sajdah created the rumour that everyone accepted Islam in Mecca. This rumour spread so much that it reached Abyssinia and they returned. A simple story.

Surah Najam is such a powerful and eloquent surah. And there is an element of excitement being built up, that verse by verse even the Quraish were overwhelmed by the power of the surah, and they prostrated. This translation of the last few *ayahs*³, Allah says:

And that it is He who enriches and suffices
 And that it is He who is the Lord of Sirius
 And that He destroyed the first [people of] 'Aad
 And Thamud - and He did not spare [them]
 And the people of Noah before.

Indeed, it was they who were [even] more unjust and oppressing.

And the overturned towns He hurled down
 And covered them by that which He covered.
 Then which of the favours of your Lord do you doubt?

This [Prophet] is a warner like the former warners.

The Approaching Day has approached.
 Of it, [from those] besides Allah, there is no remover.

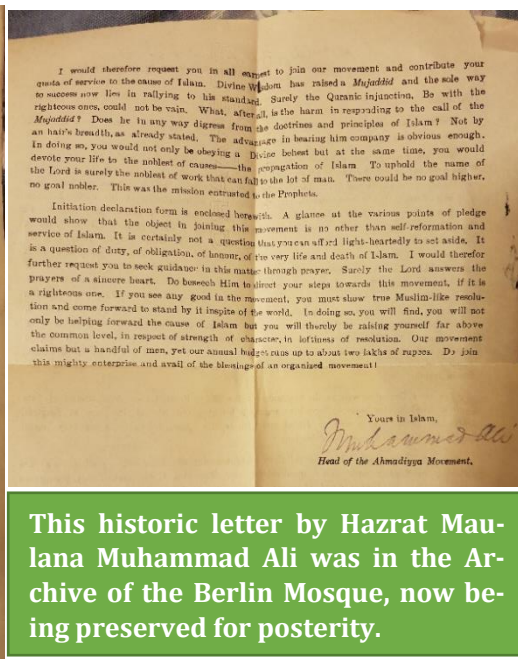
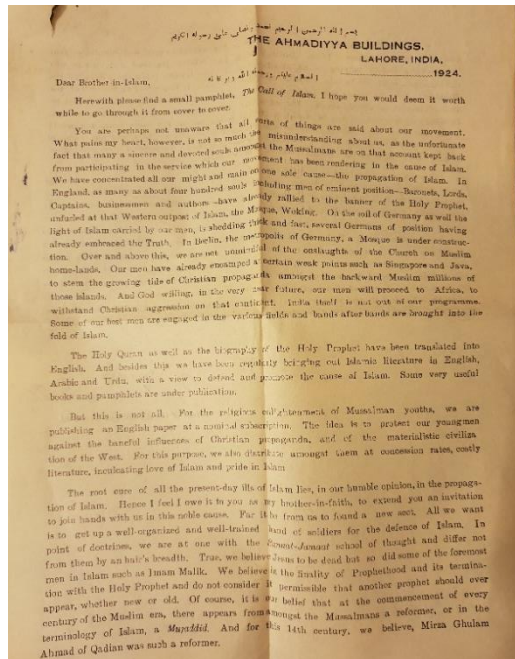
Then at this statement do you wonder?

And you laugh and do not weep

While you are proudly sporting?

So, prostrate to Allah and worship [Him].

Imagine the Prophet (S) reciting this so powerfully. And it is truly a powerful surah which constant rhetorical questions - and so when the Prophet (S) reaches the end and falls in *sajdah*, he falls down and even the Quraish fall down. And so, version 1, the Bukhari version is the authentic version. There is no need for a far-fetched tale to explain it. Narrated by Ibn Abbas: "the Prophet (S) recited Surah Najam, and he prostrated, and every single person, even the jinn, prostrated with him - except for Waleed ibn Mugira (not a relevant detail)". No mention of shaitan.



This historic letter by Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ali was in the Archive of the Berlin Mosque, now being preserved for posterity.

Version 2

These revolve around reports not found in the famous books of hadith. Nor in ibn Ishaq or ibn Hisham. They are found usually in the book that

¹ Prostration or fell on their faces.

³ verses

² Companions (r)of the Holy Prophet (s)

collected everything. Such as at-Tabari *tafseers*. He said in the introduction of his book that he would report absolutely everything he hears, authentic or not since he wants to collect all the information so that this is not lost and later the researchers can do research using it. Most modern criticism about Islam comes from Tabari (and Waqidi). So next time, whenever you will find the reference of Tabari in criticism, keep it in mind. Tabari is not Bukhari - Bukhari was a critical collector. And, because it involves Iblees, the western researcher, an orientalist called Sir William said we would call it the 'satanic verses'.

In essence versions 2 and three are the same but with one critical difference. So, we now have version 2. This version adds details again not found in Bukhari or any well-known source of *seerah*.

It goes back to Uruwa ibn Zubaid. Recall he was not a *sahabi*, so there is a missing link in the chain of narration - it does not go back to the Prophet (S). He was a famous *tabi*¹ but not a *sahabi*. Uruwa was not narrating from the Prophet (S). Uruwa says that when surah Najam was being recited. Verse 19 and 20 Allah says "have you not seen Al-lat and Al-Uzza and Manaaf? Are you going to get the males and you will give him the females? What an unfair sharing." Now the story is this: Uruwa said "after verse 20, shaitan cried out, and he added two verses that were not in the Qur'an, and these verses were heard by the unbelievers but NOT the believers. Shaitan cried out in his voice, and he added two verses - "have you seen al-lat and Uzza and the third of them Mannaf?". Then he added, "these idols are the mighty cranes, and their requests will be granted". This is the first time the idols were being 'praised' apparently. That these idols are beautiful birds and that you should worship them as their intercession will be accepted. And so, when the disbelievers heard these verses, they thought "finally he has come to the middle ground. He is willing to accept our Gods finally". Their problem was he rejected al-lat and al-Uzza, they had no problem with Allah. They said: "the Prophet (S) had agreed to accept

our Gods" and so when the Prophet (S) finished they all prostrated with him.

Version 3

In yet other narrations, again they are found in al-Waqadi - so being true and clear the satanic verses were not founded by non-Muslims. They are found in Muslim sources. This is why non-Muslims jump on this. That they say, the Qur'an can be changed by shaitan. So, to non-Muslims, this story proves the Prophet (S) invented the Qur'an, and so he changes his theology one day to the next. So, he is just changing his views to get people to come to him. It is not fabricated by non-Muslims - it is found in our sources. Version 3 is even worse. In version 2 shaitan recited out, and the people heard. Version 3 is worse - in this version the Prophet (S) hears shaitan recitation and thinks it is Jibraeel AS reciting to him, and he with his tongue recited those satanic verses. This is of course even worse. As we are known, saying the Prophet (S) could not tell the difference between shaitan and Jibraeel AS. This is the premise for their argument. Once again being academically true this is found in Islamic sources, not non-Islamic sources.

Why version 1 is true:

We have three versions. Version 1 is in the most authentic book found in the most authentic sources. We can cross out version 2 and 3 for the following seven reasons:

1. Claiming that Iblees can inspire the Prophet (S) seems to interfere with the process of *wahi*. And Allah guarantees the process of *wahi* - there are so many verses that talk about the purity of revelation. Of course, ibn Tammiyah would say it is pure as Allah corrects this.

2. There is no authentic version of the satanic incident. Every single incident is weak, and none of them is an unbroken chain back to the Prophet (S). The strongest chain goes back to al-Bak-Baak. And people have attempted to

¹ The next generation

fabricate the Qur'an, but they have never succeeded in this.

3. Even if we forget the isnad analysis, look at the story itself: there are so many versions of it. Another version is that the Holy Prophet (s) was sleepy, and he messed up. Another version says that he was in salah at the Kaaba when reciting. And another version says that he was sitting in the gathering, reciting.

4. No authentic book of hadith mentions this incident - not even ibn Hisham and Ibn Ishaq (the authentic books of *seerah*). They are found in the tertiary sources.

5. A contextual analysis of the verses. Verses 19-20 show that what will follow will be criticism because of the *istifham qaari* (derogatory questioning). Even in English, you do not speak like this when speaking of something to be honoured. Then comes the verse after ("unjust division"). If the satanic verses are inserted, the story makes no sense. From criticism to praise to criticism, it doesn't work linguistically or contextually!

6. (Pointed out by Muhammad Abdu - mufti of Egypt d. 1905 CE) Even linguistically it makes no sense because the word *gharaneek* has never been used in pre-Islamic poetry to refer to the idols. This would be the only time it is found in this story. If Shaitan wanted to fool the pagans, he would choose a word that they recognised.

7. We have the authentic story of Bukhari with a good enough explanation and the power of the Qur'an, and everything makes sense. Why would we resort to the Satanic Verses? Ibn Abbas (r) said the power of the chapter was so much that the Muslims, non-believers and jinn all prostrated except one man raising dirt to his forehead (Waleed b. Mugheerah or Umayya b. Khalaf).

Modern researcher as to where this story came from: even legends have a basis. There is a modern historian who theories that when the Quraish prostrated, they felt embarrassed they had become so emotional. As a result, they said the reason they did this was that the Holy

Prophet (s) had agreed to praise their idols. Sadly, we cannot find classic reasoning. It is a reality that the next generation narrated it, but none of the Companions mentioned it. In the end, all verses have been accounted for; those two verses are not in the Qur'an anyway - NO ONE says they are and so as Allah says He has made His verses crystal clear.

<https://youtu.be/wFq5ZnD6pFQ>

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THE CREATOR OF THE WORLD AND HIS ATTRIBUTES

Faizaan Ahmad
(4th-year Medical
Student)

(Text of the Friday
khutbah delivered on
4th January at the Dar
us Salaam, Wembley,
London).



In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

- 1 Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds,
- 2 The Beneficent, the Merciful,
- 3 Master of the day of Requital.
- 4 Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help.
- 5 Guide us on the right path,



I Shall Love All Mankind.

6 The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours,
 7 Not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray.

The verses which I have recited to you, have been taken from Chapter one of the Holy Quran, the opening Chapter of this Divine scripture.

It is a well-known chapter of the Holy Quran called *The Al-Fātihah*. It is essentially read by anyone beginning the study of the Holy Quran and also on other occasions to open any function or activity. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) has said, "I have been given two blessings that no other prophet has received, one of these is the *Al-Fātihah*, and the other is the last section of *Al-Baqarah* (the second chapter of the Holy Quran)". How very true is his statement because these two portions of the Holy Quran contain a sea of knowledge, wisdom and guidance. It is important to be aware of the spiritual knowledge, wisdom and essential principles of guidance in the *Al-Fātihah* because it is recited several times a day by every Muslim. Besides calling it the most excellent revelation, the like of which was not given to any other prophet, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s), also named it *Umm al-Kitāb*, that is the basis of the Book. Thus we can understand the critical need to understand it.

It must be noted that the *Al-Fātihah* is not only unique, being the Opening chapter of the Qur'an, but it is also a most excellent prayer for a person in difficult times of his life. It is therefore imperative to understand the vast and comprehensive nature of these verses.

The words, "In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful"; stamped at the beginning of every chapter but one, indicate that it has been revealed by Allah, Who, out of His grace and mercy has given us all the means for our physical existence and progress. He has also granted us the extraordinary and splendid gift of the 'spirit' for a life everlasting and the development and progress of our eternal spiritual life through the revelation of the Holy Quran. All of

this is inclusive of the word *Al-Rahmān* (the Beneficent). The attribute of *Al-Rahīm* (the Merciful) indicates that if the reader of the Holy Quran acts upon its teachings, he will develop spiritually and morally and will attain peace in this world and the Hereafter as a special gift. The letter *Ba* in *Bismillāh* also means that one is beginning in the name of Allah and seeking His assistance. He is requesting the Beneficent Who has revealed the Quran, that He, out of His Mercy, should bless the suppliant one with its knowledge and comprehension and give him the ability to act upon it so that he might achieve the lofty goals of the Quranic revelation.

Al-Fātihah has been named in the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) by different names. The most well-known name is *Al-Fātihah* (the Opening) or *Fātiha-tul-Kitāb* (the Opening of the Book). By 'opening' is meant that it opens the door to the wisdom of the Holy Quran. Also opened up in this short chapter of seven verses is the path of guidance, Divine recognition and knowledge which is unparalleled for all times. Although volumes have been written on this chapter, its treasures do not get depleted, some of which I will attempt to highlight.

Man wonders, Who is the Originator of this great universe in which even a single atom is such a marvel of creation? Man wants to know Who or What He, the Creator is? He would like to know the names and attributes of this Divine Being. Next arises the question of whether the Creator and Sustainer of this great universe are two separate entities or is it the work of One Divine Being? Why did this Divine Being create the earth and all life in it? What is the position of humanity in this creation? What is the purpose of man's creation? What kind of effort should one exert to attain the objective of his creation? Different people and nations are following their direction, and everyone considers his way of thinking to be the correct one. Which then is the right path out of this maze? How can one find out, if the way he is following is the correct one? Has anyone achieved the purpose of his existence by treading on this path? What are the consequences of not following this path?

Scriptures were revealed to all nations before the Holy Quran came into existence, but today there are nations in which no trace of these revelations can be found, and they are following their own individual ways. What are the adverse consequences of doing so? This chapter has unveiled all these secrets in such a brief but the concise manner that no human being could have possibly accomplished this, as I hope, you will soon be able to appreciate.

Let us consider the Arabic word *Al-hamdu-lillāh* (All praise is due to Allah). The letters *Alif*, *Lam*, indicate comprehensiveness in the sense of entity (i.e., true, genuine and exclusive praise). Thus, all praise is for Allah Who is the Rabb (Lord - One Who is Nourisher unto Perfection) of the whole universe, all of creation and every nation. Allah is the proper name of the Divine Being. It is the prime obligation of any revealed scripture that it should inform its reader about the identity of the One Who is responsible for its revelation and the purpose behind it.

The Holy Quran is the only revealed scripture which tells us at its very beginning, when we recite, *Bismillāh-ir-Rahmān-ir-Rahīm*, (In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful) that the name of its author is Allah. The preponderance of Beneficence in His nature led to the creation of mankind and the revelation of this Book for his guidance. If a person follows this guidance, it brings into action Allah's mercy, and He rewards him in this life and the Hereafter with eternal bliss.

The One and Only God Who can be accepted today is the One that the Holy Quran begins to inform us about in the words *Al-hamdu-lillāhi Rabbi al-'ālamīn* "All Praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds": A Lord Who creates, develops and nourishes to perfection the whole universe and everything within it. Human nature is such that it does not appreciate a defect or fault in a fellow being, how could it accept any deficiency or weakness in the Divine Being? God should be free from defects. All of His attributes should be to the degree of complete perfection.

Al-hamdu-lillāh – (All Praise is due to Allah),

indicates that goodness has reached its perfection in Allah. It also tells us that since all good qualities are for Allah, the concept of righteousness and all admirable qualities that have arisen in the human mind are awareness of the attributes of Allah. The human brain, unlike that of any other animal, is an anatomical organ in which the concept of righteousness cannot arise by itself. Thus, we observe that animals do not have the concept of rectitude or higher moral and spiritual values. If they do exhibit some qualities such as maternal love and tenderness for their offspring, these are instinctive and have been programmed into their nature by the Creator for the survival of the offspring. They do not have the realisation of what is good or evil to guide them towards its performance or abstention from it. Human beings like all other animals have the instincts of self and species' preservation. However, human beings are exclusively bestowed with the realisation of higher moral and spiritual values through Divine revelation.

The Holy Quran mentions revelation to animals like the honey bee, but the revelation in that context refers only to the instinctive guidance given to it to achieve the purpose of its creation. Humans have been created for a purpose much higher than the lower animals. It is to achieve the realisation of Divine attributes within himself. He was for this reason given knowledge of these attributes through Divine revelation from the very beginning. The Holy Quran tells us about this in verse 37 of chapter 2: "Then Adam received words (revelation) from his Lord". Remember, the word Rabb (Lord), is the Nourisher unto Perfection from the lowest to the highest stages of development. The condition of man at the time of his birth is similar to that of an animal, but he has been created so that his spirit, which is from Allah, should reflect the Divine attributes within itself. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Create the moral characteristics of Allah within yourself." The Holy Quran has also endorsed this in chapter 2 verse 138 when it tells us: "Colour yourself with the colour of Allah, and who is better than Allah at colouring". Creating Allah's colouring in oneself means

colouring ourselves with His attributes. Allah did not reveal His attributes only to the first created man, Adam. The Holy Quran tells us, "There is not a people, but a warner has gone among them" (35: 24). This is again reiterated in chapter 10 verse 47 when it states: "and for every nation, there is a messenger". A message that was in the form of a revealed scripture, which made man aware of the attributes of Allah and enjoined upon him to inculcate those attributes within himself. An arrangement which has continued for thousands of years to create the concept of spiritual and moral excellence in the human mind.

In trying to chart out a course for themselves without the assistance of God, humans proposed Communism and Capitalism, both of which have contributed to the concept of atheism. How can those who do not believe in the existence of God, accept that which was revealed by Him? Nevertheless, the existence of a Divine Being is the basis of all faiths. The testimony of one hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets, as narrated in the Hadith, in addition to that of millions of righteous servants of Allah, whose truthfulness was well established, and the evidence provided by all revealed scriptures, are such powerful arguments in support of this truth, that it cannot be denied by any intelligent person. In our courts of law, matters of great contention that might even extend to the life of a murderer are sometimes decided by the evidence of one truthful witness. Here we have the testimony of thousands of truthful ones, that there is a Divine Being with Whom they were able to establish communication, but man finds it difficult to believe in Him. Further proof of their truthfulness is that those who follow them with complete submission also achieved blessings and their work in this world still lives on centuries after they have passed away.

If we use our common sense, it becomes quite apparent that every atom in this immense and intriguing universe, evidence and manifests the presence and workings of a Divine Being. For this very reason, a scientific inquiry which initially assumed an atheistic philosophy has now been forced to admit that this Universe has

one Creator because the whole of creation is made up of the same matter and is obligated to follow the same universal laws. Every man's nature provides the ultimate testimony of the existence of a Divine Being. All human beings in times of distress and difficulty, particularly when life is being threatened, spontaneously cry out for Divine assistance. In any language and any religion, the call is always 'O God!'

We have just learnt about the significance of the Opening Chapter of the Holy Quran, Al-Fātihah. The word *Fātihah* means a key which opens a thing which is locked.

While discussing *Al-Fātihah* we have also learnt how Allah has blessed us with immense resources for our benefit, but we enjoy them only when we utilise our faculties endowed by Allah. Our experience shows that there are tremendous resources still hidden in the earth and also in our selves. Thus, surah *Fātihah* urges us to dig out these hidden resources.

That is why Allah wants us to make an effort to discover the great benefits lying hidden, as the Quran says: "And that man can have nothing but what he strives for and that striving will soon be seen. Then he will be rewarded for it with the fullest reward" (53:39-41).

The very first attribute of Allah mentioned at the start of *Surah Fātihah* is *Rabb al-'Alameen* which means He is the Lord of the worlds. Here the word 'worlds' stands not only for various worlds on this earth such as the animal world, the world lying hidden in the vast atmosphere and the world lying hidden under the earth etc. All these worlds are there for the human being to exploit their resources.

The repetition of *Surah Fātihah* has been recommended because Allah wants us to be conscious of the tremendous resources made available to us and He expects us to exploit them. But mere recitation of *Surah Fātihah* will not yield those results which have been promised unless we change our attitude and make a conscious effort to live up to the objectives mentioned in the Quran for our guidance. The Quran says: "Surely Allah changes not the

condition of a people, until they change their own condition." (Quran, 13:11).

Let us resolve not only to praise Allah for all the bounties provided by Him but also plan how to exploit them for our benefit and the benefit of human beings.

The New Year has already started. The important question is: How am I going to live in the year that lies ahead?

The New Year is a good time to initiate a plan. So you can make some changes and live your life to the fullest. See if you can practise thinking differently. Decide very specifically what it is that you would like to change about yourself in the new year. If you have some goals in mind, make a vow to work towards them day by day rather than making them a year-long project.

Here are six suggestions which can help you in making some positive changes in your attitude and achievements:

1. Remember that habits are changed by adopting new behaviour. By practising new thinking, you will soon begin to master the art of how to make a positive living.
2. Do an honest assessment of your "problems." You will very likely discover that lots of your problems are really in your head and not located in reality.
3. Change your attitude. Begin an attitude of redeveloping your plans. That means learn how to enjoy everything you do.
4. Be specific about what you want and take action accordingly. Decide on one thing that you would like to work on and do it today. Work at it daily, rather than making it a long-range objective.
5. Don't give control of your life to others. You cannot enjoy the present if you are busy trying to make everyone else like you. People respect you more when you operate from a position of self-reliance.
6. Feel good about yourself. You are a magnificent human being and a unique creation of God.

I wish you all a very happy New Year filled with many miracles. May you enjoy a joyous, healthy, and productive life. And do not forget that everything lies with God and it is He alone Who can bless your efforts. This is the great lesson *Bismillah-ir-Rahmaan-ir-Raheem* wants us to learn. So, make a start and keep on reciting Surah Fātihah to seek His guidance.

Sources:

1. English Translation of the Holy Qur'an, Maulana Muhammad Ali.
2. Khutbahs on the Qur'an, Iqbal Hydal, Trinidad

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Six reporting tips for covering Islam in America

Kalpna Jain

Research has shown that media coverage of Islam is overwhelmingly negative. Often Islam is depicted as a violent religion and Muslim women, wearing head coverings, as oppressed. Even though Islam is the third largest religion in the United States after Christianity and Judaism (and the second largest religion in the world), many Americans do not know a Muslim personally. News, therefore, plays an important role in forming opinions about Muslims.

It can be challenging for journalists to sort through the many misconceptions and stereotypes about Islam and provide an accurate portrayal of the 3.45 million Muslims estimated to be living in the U.S. as of 2017.

Hannah Allam, who, until a recent round of layoffs, was a national reporter at BuzzFeed News, has reported on the lives of American Muslims for many years. She shared six tips for covering Islam in the U.S. in a phone interview with Journalist's Resource.

In seeking the perspectives of Muslims, look beyond the mosques:

According to a Pew Research Center survey,

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4 in 10 American Muslims attend a mosque weekly. About 30 per cent of American Muslims go to a mosque only a few times a year, and about 25 per cent do not go at all.

Allam thus cautions journalists against talking to Muslims in a mosque as the only sources for a story about Islam in America. “When you rely only on the mosque for sources, you are getting views that are typically more conservative and orthodox, and they don’t represent the full spectrum of Islamic practice in the U.S.,” she says.

As to where reporters can go, she suggests reaching out to groups such as associations of Muslim doctors and Muslim student associations. If reporters look around, they will also find professional groups such as arts groups and writers’ groups.

Before choosing to use an Arabic word in a story, think about why you’re choosing it:

When reporting on Islam for English-speaking news outlets, many journalists use Arabic terms or other foreign words such as “Allah,” “hijab” or “Sharia.” “Allah” is Arabic for God, while “hijab” is not just a head covering; it is a broad term to describe modest dress. It could mean many different kinds of covering for modesty — a headscarf, or a veil that partially covers the face; a burqa, which covers the face and body; or a chador, which is a cloak that covers the body. Help the reader understand what it is and be specific about what it is that is being called a hijab, Allam says.

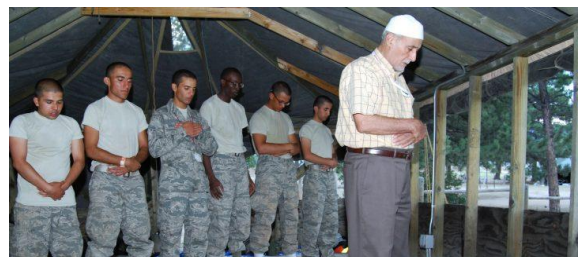
She emphasizes that these terms might be fairly well known but are certainly not widely understood. If you’re thinking about using foreign terms, ask if there is a more accessible word, she says.

“Sharia” is a broad code of jurisprudence. Often, Sharia is reported as a hard-line interpretation of Islam. Sharia appears in news stories when such interpretations lead to harsh acts such as caning, stoning or beheading. That nar-

row interpretation, she says, is neither representative of mainstream Islam or of Sharia itself. Sharia encompasses many things such as marriage law (including the right to alimony) and inheritance.

It is true that in some Islamic countries, fundamentalist groups use strict interpretations of Sharia to condone violence. But that is not how most Muslims understand or practice, Allam says. In an essay for *The Conversation*, Asma Afsaruddin, a religion professor at the University of Indiana, explains that Sharia is not a substitute for civil law, but a way for ordinary Muslims to lead a life guided by the ethics of their faith. Allam urges reporters to call up a university and talk to an Islamic scholar to ask whether any given practice is an accurate representation of Sharia. Allam says reporters should also be careful when saying “Sharia law.” It is as redundant as saying “chai tea.” Both words mean the same thing.

Similarly, she recommends that reporters ask themselves why they are using an Arabic word for God. It makes sense to use “Allah” within a direct quote, or within a specific reference, such as a Muslim greeting of “Inshallah,” which means “God willing,” she says. But in a more general reference to God, she cautions against using the word “Allah” just because the story refers to Muslims. She urges reporters to ask: If a reporter would not use the word “Dios,” the Spanish word for “God,” when reporting on religion in relation to Latinos, why would they refer to God as “Allah” in stories about Muslims? That makes it appear as though Muslims worship a different God and makes them look like “the other,” Allam says.



Imam Mohammed Jodeh leads Air Force Academy basic cadets in evening prayer during a Muslim service at the Jacks Valley training complex in Colorado Springs, July 22, 2012. (U.S. Air Force photo/Don Branum)

Don't overgeneralize:

American Muslims are a highly diverse group. There are many Muslim subcultures, traditions and practices.

Among them are African-American Muslims, who account for a fifth of the overall U.S. Muslim population, and encompass a wide diversity of traditions, history and ethnicities. A Pew Research Center report indicates that 51 per cent of Muslims whose families have lived in the U.S. for at least three generations are black. African Muslims arrived as slaves as early as the 17th century and have been an integral part of the U.S. since its founding.

Also, as with every other religious and ethnic group in the U.S., Muslims, too, bring a long history, along with diversity. Abbas Barzegar, national director of research and advocacy at the Council on American-Islamic Relations, told Journalist's Resource that in the first wave of immigration, starting in the late 19th to the 20th century, Muslims immigrated to the U.S. They included Arab immigrants as well as Turks and Muslims from the Balkan states, followed by Muslims from Yemen and Syria.

And following the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, Muslims arrived from the rest of the world. In a piece for *The Conversation*, Barzegar writes, "Outside of Mecca itself, there exists no other Muslim population that displays the theological, ideological, class and ethnic diversity as that which resides here [in the U.S]."

Therefore, says Allam, "Try to stay away from writing about 'the Muslim community.' There's no such thing. The 3.5 million Muslims in this country come from a variety of communities with different practices and beliefs."

Be careful about portraying Islam as a roadblock to personal achievements:

Allam recommends that journalists ask themselves if a potential story subject would be newsworthy if it weren't for his or her Muslim identity. "If the person isn't newsworthy apart

from being Muslim, why are you writing about them?"

She explains that it made sense to report on the first Muslim women in Congress because they represented a big milestone. But some stories focusing on Muslim women's accomplishments can feel "contrived and condescending," she says, such as features on Muslim women playing basketball or soccer, who are portrayed as newsworthy just because they are wearing headscarves.

Make an effort to include Muslim voices in many types of stories:

On the other hand, Allam encourages reporters to include Muslim voices in stories that are not explicitly about Islam. Quote them in stories about topics other than religion, hate crimes or national security, she says.

"That will show readers the diversity of their professions — for example, call a Muslim doctor or a Muslim fashion designer and so on," she says.

The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, a think tank focused on the American Muslim community, noted in a 2018 report that over 11 per cent of New York City's engineers are Muslim. Thus, it makes sense to include Muslim voices in stories about engineering. Similarly, a large number of Muslims work in medical professions.

Showcase diversity in your image choices, too:

While many resource-constrained newsrooms have a shortage of photographers, it's important not to rely on stock photos of random women in head coverings. In the interest of avoiding stereotypes, there are many other ways in which Muslims can be represented. "I seldom see pictures like those of my brothers, who served as U.S. Marines," Allam says.

Indeed, Barzegar writes about "the so-called 'unmosqued' millennials — a younger generation of Muslims who prefer non-profits and social start-ups to mosques and minarets,"

who can be found in Silicon Valley and Syrian refugee camps — and also on Snapchat.

<https://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/religion/six-tips-for-reporting-on-muslims-in-america/>

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Faith Matters: Quran, other sacred texts tell us to put aside our ethnic differences

Professor Jimmy E. Jones

Chairman of World Religions, Manhattanville College and board chairman, The Islamic Seminary of America.

“O Humanity! Reverence your guardian Lord who created you from a single person; created of like nature, his mate, and from the two of them scattered countless men and women (throughout the earth)”, Quran 4:1.

Even though February is African Heritage / Black History month, it is worth noting that, from the Islamic religious worldview and the Darwinian biological perspective, there is only one “race” — the human race. Consequently, “Black history” is a by-product of a social construct. This construct is a result of the struggles of my ancestors who were forcefully immigrated to these shores as chattel. The consistent aim of these struggles was focused on efforts for us to be recognized as fully human within the context of the socio-political experiment known as the United States of America.

From this country’s early colonial times, the trials and tribulations of Muslims and people of African descent have intertwined and overlapped. Further, the centrality of written and recited the Quran in the life of the ordinary enslaved Muslim meant that they tended to be more literate and articulate than other average enslaved African. This point is well documented

in Sylviane Diouf’s important book, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*.

Given the above, it is small wonder that in more recent American history we still find a consistent overlap between Islam and the African American human rights struggle. Particular examples include Marcus Garvey’s 1920’s Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League and Malcolm X’s 1960s Muslim Mosque Inc. Notably, Malcolm X’s parents were involved in the UNIA. Similarly, Elijah Muhammed, one of the founders of the black nationalist-oriented Nation of Islam was influenced by UNIA teachings.

I have been an African American convert to Islam for more than three decades. Like many others, I was drawn to Islam as a result of reading the “Autobiography of Malcolm X.” In it, I found a story strongly resonant with the experience I had growing up in an America segregated by “race.” I subsequently picked up the Quran and read it (in translation) for myself. I found the Quran to be a document characterized by radical mercy and social justice (e.g., see Quran 4:135). This is one of the prime reasons that I and many other African Americans converted to Islam. In short, Islam seemed to be a way for African Americans to gain their full humanity in America.

As we celebrate, commemorate, and reflect upon African Heritage / Black History month, we would do well to remember that the Quran and other sacred texts call upon us to put aside our ethnic differences in service of the common good. As Quran 49:13 states:

“People, We have created you all male and female and have made you nations and tribes so that you would recognize each other. The most honorable among you in the sight of God is the most pious of you. God is All-knowing and All-aware.”

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