

# CULTURE

**C**ulture is defined as a people's complete way of life. It consists of all the ideas, objects and ways of doing things created by the group. Culture includes beliefs, customs, language and traditions (World Book Encyclopaedia).

While there are numerous cultures and subcultures present in the world, of primary concern to us in this discussion are the two main opposing cultures in present-day society. One is the culture of Islam — the "complete way of life" set forth in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. On the other opposing end is the Western culture. Both cultures present a "complete way of life." However, both ways of life differ drastically.

The difference in the two cultures stems primarily from the source of the cultures. Islamic culture — the way of life of a Muslim — is defined by the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. It is the culture of *Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)*. It is that way of life upon which he established the *Sahaaba (R.A.)* after having turned them away from the culture of *jahiliyyah* (ignorance).

On the other hand, Western culture is fashioned by a host of people; Capitalists, atheists, people who believe in same-gender marriages and others of a similar nature. Such people determine the decadent culture of the West.

### NO FLIRTATIOUS INTENT

The cornerstone of Islamic culture is **morality** (*hayaa*) and **simplicity**. *Hayaa* (morality / modesty) and simplicity are both qualities of Imaan. Thus the true Islamic society upholds the highest levels of morality and maintains simplicity in every aspect. Some of the salient features of this society are:

- ◆ No free intermingling between non-mahram (those who are not forbidden to marry) males and females. The laws of *Hijaab* will be observed.
- ◆ Modest dressing. Clothing will truly **cover** the body (also loose enough to cover the shape) and have no flirtatious intent.
- ◆ Men and women will fulfil the separate roles that have been apportioned to them — the husband as breadwinner and the wife as mother and one who fulfils the household responsibilities, etc. This is the foundation to a stable Islamic family which together with other such families forms a stable Islamic community.

Contrary to this, the cornerstone of Western culture is immorality and extravagance. The "live-in" culture where a couple live like man and wife but never marry — is almost the norm. While there are numerous

aspects that highlight the immorality of Western culture, perhaps the most visible and marked expression of this culture is in its dressing. Shorter, tighter and more revealing is the rule by which the dress code keeps changing. Western clothing, instead of covering and distracting any wrongful glances, is by and large designed for flirting, attracting and arousing. As for simplicity in Western culture, it is almost a kind of tragedy. Since the poor fellow cannot afford to indulge in anything extravagant, hence merely due to circumstances, he is forced to adopt a simple lifestyle. Fashion-slavery is part of western life. If one does not have a branded garment, it is tragic. If the real thing is not available, a fake will also do. If it is not a branded product, it is then only for the have-nots even if it is of a better quality and lesser cost.

While the above are some of the serious core differences between Islamic and Western culture, the most important aspect is the difference in the mindset of both cultures.

### PURPOSE OF LIFE

The mindset of the Islamic culture stems from the conviction that Allah Ta'ala is our Creator and Sustainer. Hence in this short stay on earth, we are to serve Him alone in the manner taught by His beloved Rasul (*Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam*). Thus the Islamic culture revolves around the firm belief that our mission in life is to establish complete *Deen* in ourselves and on the face of this earth. With this mindset, one will sacrifice one's wealth, energies and time as much as possible for the purpose of life. Indeed one will acquire the necessities of life as well, but *Deen* will be the guiding light and driving force. *Deen* will dictate and all else will follow. The "purpose of life" will demand — and all else will submit. As a result if one does not acquire many comforts and luxuries, it will not matter. Rather, life will be regarded as a journey wherein the traveller is not too concerned about the luxuries and comforts en-route. The traveller is focused towards his destination. Yet, as a result of one's obedience to Allah Ta'ala, one will be blessed with true peace, serenity and contentment.

### CHASING FUN

Conversely, the mindset of Western culture is that the purpose of life is worldly enjoyment. Every comfort and luxury that can be acquired must be attained at all

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costs. Everything centres around entertainment, chasing fun ... and chasing more fun. There is no mission in life. No objective. Merely the pursuit of temporal pleasure permeates every cell of the mind. And yes indeed! The constant pursuit of greater comfort and luxury and continuously chasing fun demands loads of money. Thus life revolves around making money — from early morning till late at night — and having fun. If anything comes in the way of this fun, it must be removed. If looking after elderly parents “spoils the weekends and holidays” they should be dispatched to the old-age homes. If children come in the way of earning extra money to afford “the better quality of life,” they can be entrusted to day-care centres where they are treated almost like mechanical objects. There is no concern for proper upbringing. In order to “enhance the quality of life” (which means making more money to have more luxuries and more fun) anything can be sacrificed — parents, children and even religion. It is an extremely hollow existence without any peace or contentment — which only stops when one is placed in the hollow of the grave!

It is thus evident that Islamic culture and Western culture are worlds apart. The problem is that when people of different cultures live together in the same community, the process of enculturation takes place where people from one culture adopt traits, customs, habits and ideas from the other culture. There is no doubt that this enculturation has occurred in our communities. Many Muslims have tragically become greatly Westernised in their mindset, in adopting a very extravagant lifestyle, in their dressing, in making life revolve mainly around chasing money and fun, etc. Deen for such people has become a “side-line.”

Why has this enculturation occurred? The answer is alarming! According to social scientists, people abandon their own culture and borrow from another culture when they regard aspects of the other culture as “better” (World Book). Encyclopaedia Britannica (CD version) highlights this aspect in the following words: **“To be sure, a culture trait must offer some advantage, some utility or pleasure to be sought and accepted by people.”** Allah forbid! Due to the weakness of *Imaan* and ignorance, the *Sunnah* culture is being abandoned by Muslims for some Western way which they regard as “better” or as having more pleasure and advantage than the Islamic culture! This is no different to a child who gives away a priceless diamond in exchange for an insignificant shiny stone. He has no idea of the value of the gems he is abandoning and is duped by the shine on the stone.

## “FOOLS”

Western culture is being glorified and vigorously promoted by the media as *the* culture. The media message simply is: “If you are not following the Western trend, you are old fashioned, backward and

maybe dumb.” However, these slogans should not make us lose our priceless gems for worthless stones, rather, poisonous pebbles. Instead we should adopt the stance of *Hazrat* Huzaifa bin Yamaan (*R.A.*). While eating in the court of the Persians, a morsel of food fell from his hand onto the floor. In emulation of the *Sunnah*, he picked it up to eat it. Somebody next to him cautioned him that to pick up a fallen morsel was against the culture of the Persians. He should therefore follow their way and refrain from picking up the morsel. His spontaneous response was: **“Should I leave the *Sunnah* (culture) of my beloved *Rasulullah* (*Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam*) for these fools?”**

Adopting Western culture will bring along its severe negative consequences. Some of them are:

- ◆ A materialistic society with no mission in life
- ◆ Indulgence in drugs and immorality “for fun”
- ◆ Break-down of respect for parents and elders
- ◆ Disintegration of family structures
- ◆ High divorce rate, etc.

Every effort must therefore be made to preserve the culture of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. This requires adopting the company of those who are sunnah conscious, learning about the various sunnats and making an effort to bring them alive in ones home, community and the Ummah at large.

If Western trends take root, besides harming ourselves, we will also lay the foundation for the destruction of future generations. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, “once established, culture has a life of it’s own ... it flows down through time from one generation to another.” It is therefore imperative that we guard against this. The only success for us in this world and the Hereafter is in upholding the way of life of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. May *Allah Ta'ala* keep us steadfast on His Deen. *Aameen.*

## "JAMMIES" IN THE MUSJID

**Q** Recently I went for *Salaah* to the *Musjid* dressed in a bermuda shorts (jammie) and T shirt. In the *Musjid* a brother approached me and harshly reprimanded me for coming to the *Musjid* dressed in the bermuda. I tried to explain to him that my knees were also covered therefore my *Salaah* is valid. He insisted that I should not come to the *Musjid* in that manner. I was very disappointed and left. Would my *Salaah* have been valid or not? Was the brother correct in reprimanding me?

**A** While the brother's intentions were obviously good, it would have been better if he advised you with kindness and wisdom.

You are also correct that your *Salaah* would have been valid in the sense that the obligation would have been fulfilled. In fact your *Salaah* would have been valid even if you came dressed only in your "jammies" without any other clothing, provided that you were covered from the navel to the knee. The question is whether such attire is appropriate for *Salaah*?

In this regard *Allah Ta'ala* declares: **"O you who Believe! Take your adornments for every *Salaah*"** (S8:V31). *Salaah* is the most important pillar of Islam after *Imaan*. In *Salaah* one is in the court of *Allah Ta'ala* and communicating directly with him. Thus for this great occasion one must adopt such attire which is dignified (in terms of *Shariah*) and befitting.

### WEAR "JAMMIES" TO YOUR WEDDING ?

The "jammies," you will agree, is not regarded as "dignified" clothing even in the Western sense. If a person wears "jammies" for his wedding, he is bound to become a news item even in the Western media. He will surely be regarded as "odd." Let alone one's own wedding, one will not wear jammies at the wedding of a close family member or friend because the person getting married may find this offensive. If such attire is inappropriate even in the purely worldly sense, how much more inappropriate it will be in the Deeni sense is obvious.

Adorning dignified attire for *Salaah* applies to every person who is performing *Salaah* — even to a woman performing *Salaah* in the inner-most room of her house, as has been encouraged by *Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)*. Apart from being greatly inappropriate for *salaah*, the respect and honour of the *Musjid* is also compromised by undignified attire. The *Musjid* is the house of *Allah Ta'ala*; it is the "court of *Allah Ta'ala*." A person attending a mere worldly court is careful about what he wears. If one was invited by the president of the country to come to parliament and present one's requests and needs to him, will one dress in jammies? The "court" and house of *Allah Ta'ala* deserves much greater respect. Such great respect is accorded to the house of *Allah Ta'ala* that a person in need of a compulsory ghusal (bath) is not allowed to enter the *Musjid*. *Allah Ta'ala* declares: **"Those who honour the distinguishing signs of *Allah Ta'ala*, verily this (respect) emanates from the piety of the**

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## SADAQAH AND ANIMAL SLAUGHTER

**I**t is a *Mu'min's* (believers) fundamental belief that all conditions occur only by the will of *Allah Ta'ala*. Health or illness, prosperity or poverty, events that evoke happiness or incidents that plunge one into grief — all happen by the decree of *Allah Ta'ala* alone. In positive conditions one should be filled with *shukr* (gratitude) to *Allah Ta'ala*. In adverse conditions one should adopt *sabr* (patience) and seek the help of *Allah Ta'ala*.

While one is allowed to adopt permissible means to remove any difficulty, the most important aspect is to draw the help of *Allah Ta'ala*. This can be done in various ways and as many ways as possible should be adopted. Some of the various ways of drawing the help of *Allah Ta'ala* are: Sincere *istighfaar* (repentance), excessive recitation of *Durood Shareef*, recitation of the *Qur'an*, earnest *dua* as much as possible, etc. Of utmost importance is the abandoning of sin and doing righteous actions.

One of the ways encouraged in the *Ahadith* for alleviating illness and other difficulties is *sadaqah* (charity). Anything that one gives voluntarily to a needy person falls in the category of *sadaqah*. While there is no restriction on what should be given in *sadaqah*, it will be more rewarding to fulfil the need of the moment. If the need of the moment is to provide shelter for people who have been left homeless after a severe storm, or to pay the rent of a destitute person who is about to be evicted, etc., it will be more rewarding to fulfil this need instead of sacrificing an animal and distributing its meat to the poor.

### MISCONCEPTION

It is a common misconception that the benefits of *sadaqah* will only be received if an animal is slaughtered and the meat distributed. While this is also a form of *sadaqah*, it is incorrect to believe that the benefits of *sadaqah* are restricted to this particular form only, or that one's illness or any other difficulty will be alleviated by this form of *sadaqah* only. Furthermore, some people entertain many other baseless beliefs in this regard, such as that the *sadaqah* must be a goat of a particular colour or that the meat of the sacrificed animal must be left at a crossroads, etc., in order to achieve the desired benefits. Such beliefs and practices should be abandoned.

In short, *sadaqah* is a greatly virtuous act. However, it will be more rewarding to fulfil the need of the moment. There is also no special significance of slaughtering an animal as a form of *sadaqah*.

# "JAMMIES"

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**heart**" (S22:V32). The *Musjid* is among the distinguishing signs of Islam. To uphold it's honour is compulsory upon every Muslim. Attending the *Musjid* in appropriate clothing is also among the dictates of the respect of the *Musjid*.

## NULL AND VOID

While you are correct that the salaah will be valid, the rewards will be greatly decreased in such attire if the person has the means to wear dignified clothing. However, it should be noted that if the "jammies" (or any other garments) are tight-fitting in such a manner that the shape of the *satr* (part of the body compulsory to cover) is discernible, the salaah will be null and void. Often when even slightly loose garments are worn, the shape of the *satr* becomes discernible when going into ruku and sajdah. Many people are unmindful of this!

May *Allah Ta'ala* keep you and us steadfast on performing all our *Salaah* with *Jamaat* in the *Musjid* and enable us to uphold the honour and respect of the *Musjid* in every aspect. *Aameen*

## AL-HAADI WEBSITE

*Al-hamdulillah* the Al-Haadi website has been launched. All previous issues of Al-Haadi are available on the site. Several booklets and audio programmes are also available for download. The site could be accessed at: [www.alhaadi.org.za](http://www.alhaadi.org.za)  
Your duas are requested.

From the advices of ...



## FAQIHUL UMMAH

The sterling advice of Faqihul Ummah Hazrat Mufti Mahmood Saheb (*Rahmatullahi Alaihi*) has helped thousands of people to overcome many problems and difficulties — especially in the line of *Islahun Nafs* (inner-self reformation). Hereunder is an extract from his discourses.

# BE MERCIFUL

*Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)* is reported to have said: **"The most Merciful (Allah Ta'ala) bestows His mercy upon those who show mercy to others. Be merciful to the people of the earth, the One above will be merciful unto you."**

Is there anyone who is not in need of the mercy of *Allah Ta'ala*? Actually the entire universe is only existing with the mercy of *Allah Ta'ala*.

There are various ways of showing mercy unto others. If you have fed a hungry neighbour, you have shown mercy to him. If a sick person is given treatment, it is a form of mercy to him. A person is barefooted. To give him shoes is mercy to him. Somebody is walking and you are passing in your car. To stop and give him a lift is a form of mercy upon him. In short, there are numerous ways of showing mercy to others.

Just as one can show mercy to somebody physically, one can also be merciful spiritually. There can be outward mercy and inner mercy. However, the greatest mercy is to save a Muslim from the fire of *Jahannam*. Indeed to save a person from all the calamities of the Hereafter — the punishment of the grave, the hardships of the Day of Judgment, the difficulties in crossing the Bridge over *Jahannam* and the torments of hell, this is the greatest mercy that can be shown to anyone.

*Allah Ta'ala*, the *Rabb* (sustainer) of the universe sent *Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)* as a Mercy unto the universe. Hence he guided mankind towards all the aspects of benefit in this world and the Hereafter. He invited towards the Oneness of *Allah Ta'ala* and declared: **"O People! Say Laa ilaaha illallah and you will be successful."** This was a guarantee for the success of this world, the success of the grave, the Day of Judgment and success in the final abode of the Hereafter.

Therefore the greatest mercy is that one who does not know the *Kalima* is taught the *Kalima*. One who does not know how to perform *Salaah* is taught the same. A person who is neglectful of his *Salaah* is constantly advised until he eventually becomes punctual upon it. Somebody is taught to recite the *Qur'an-al-Kareem* or the *Ahadith* of *Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)* or the laws of *Deen*. All this is indeed a very great mercy that can be shown to any person.

Thus every person has the opportunity to show mercy unto others. He can teach the *Kalima* to somebody or give him some good advice. Hence *Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)* has declared: **"Show mercy unto those on the earth, the One above will show mercy to you."**