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# THE AWARENESS PARADOX

EPISTEMOLOGICAL DISTORTIONS AND DEFEATISM IN MUSLIM IDENTITY FORMATION

# Introduction

- The irresistible urge to stand against oppression
- Empathy for believers as a **sign of eeman**
- Surah Yoosuf: **Ends do NOT justify the means.**

*“The similitude of believers in regard to mutual love, affection, and fellow-feeling is that of one body; **when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches because of sleeplessness and fever.**”*

Sahih Muslim: 2586a

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- **Awareness+ unguided reactions= unintended consequences (dunya and aakhirah)**

# Terminologies and Concepts

- Islamic terminologies must be upheld, because **secular terminologies carry embedded assumptions and conceptual frameworks** that gradually distort the very Islamic concepts they attempt to replace.
- The **premise** of narrative building must be rooted in the framework of Qur'an and Sunnah

*Among the Jews are those **who distort words from their [proper] places [i.e., usages]** and say, "We hear and disobey" and "Hear but be not heard" and "Rā' inā," twisting their tongues and defaming the religion. And if they had said [instead], "We hear and obey" and "Wait for us [to understand]," it would have been better for them and more suitable.*

Qur'an, Surah Nisa: 46

# The Epistemological Problem

- Arguing purely from a premise of man-made justice framework may turn an issue into a “Muslim cause,” yet it gradually **removes Islam from its essence**. The form remains visible, while the substance disappears.
- Media discourse that seeks validation ends up seeking justice through people’s approval. We become so focused on convincing others of our suffering that we **expect ultimate justice from them alone, instead of from Allah**.

*“There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become distinct from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in taghut and believes in Allāh has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allāh is Hearing and Knowing.”*

Qur’an, Surah Baqarah: 256

# My Life My *Choice*

*And they [believers] say,  
"We hear and we obey."*

Qur'an, Surah Baqarah: 85

- Framing Islamic obligations in terms of **utility** like choice shifts it from a matter of obedience to a matter of benefit, **making its value conditional and open to rejection** when those benefits are questioned.

*"It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allāh and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should [thereafter] have any **choice** about their affair. And whoever disobeys Allāh and His Messenger has certainly strayed into clear error."*

Qur'an, Surah Ahzaab:36

# Reform-from-within the System

- The presence of “Muslim figures” within dominant systems empirically reflects intensified dilution and degeneration in the understanding of Islam, raising serious questions about the claim of achieving reform through systems rooted in un-Islamic frameworks.
- Assume people accept our religion in its diluted form, can that be real success?

*“And they have thereof no knowledge. **They follow not except assumption, and indeed, assumption avails not against the truth at all. So turn away from whoever turns his back on Our message and desires not except the worldly life.”***

Qur'an, Surah Najm: 28-29

# The *true purpose* of awareness campaigns

- Media frameworks shaping Muslim identity are inherently flawed as they **define identity through visibility**, grievance, recognition, and social legitimacy **rather than submission to Allah.**
- Seeking **validation from dominant systems** conditions Muslims to reshape and reinterpret Islam in ways that align with external expectations.

*Do they seek with them honor [through power]?  
But indeed, **honor belongs to Allāh entirely.***

Qur'an, Surah Nisa: 139

# The misunderstood concept of *'representation'* and *'identity'*

- Identity is rooted in *udubiyyah* (servitude to God), not social labels or recognition.
- Convincing people at the cost of Islamic principles gradually **turns public acceptance into the standard of measure for assessing haqq.**

*And never will the Jews  
and the Christians  
approve of you until you  
follow their religion.*

Surah Baqarah: 1209

# Viewed and Being Viewed

- Michel Foucault's theory of panopticism explains that people under constant surveillance **alter their behaviour due to the awareness of being watched**. In the context of media, this reshapes how Islam is expressed and performed publicly, making the test as much for those being viewed as for those viewing.

*“Verily, we were a disgraceful people and Allah honored us with Islam. If we **seek honor from anything besides that with which Allah honored us, Allah will disgrace us.**”-*

al-Mustadrak ‘alá al-Şahīḥayn 207

# Are we really left with nothing?

- The solution cannot remain limited to blaming external forces while neglecting internal responsibility.
- Resources already exist within the community, but are often exhausted in israaf, lavish consumption, status display, and people-pleasing.
- Wealth within the ummah must be redirected toward building independent institutions, support systems, and sustainable communal resources.

# Hudaybiyyah and Misinterpretation

- Hudaibiyyah reflected strategic concession, not compromise upon the **non-negotiable foundations of Islam.**
- **Umrah was neither compulsory at that stage nor abandoned;** it was only strategically postponed.
- Prophetic patience and gentleness remained inseparable from firmness upon haqq, never from moral or theological dilution
- **The case of Abu Jandal R.A demonstrated principled restraint; an individual trial did not emotionally destabilize the entire ummah or reduce the community to reactive outrage.**
- His situation was addressed through **strategic efforts in the 'background'** without breaching the treaty or converting the entire discourse into public spectacle. Focus was on reform, not collective outrage.

# Victimhood Culture

- **Memorialisation/Black Day:** Endless loop of defeatist mindset
- **Stockholm Syndrome:** Seeking validation from the very perpetrator
- **Mob mentality:** We follow 'identity' tag over nuances. This further compromises justice. Because we blindly support Muslim 'identity'.
- **Collective despair/ Mass Hysteria**
- **Criminal Imitation.**
- **Moral Superiority and Competitiveness.**

*"It is not lawful for a Muslim woman who believes in Allah and the Last Day to mourn for more than three days, except for her husband, for whom she should mourn for four months and ten days."*

Sahih Al-Bukhari 5339

# ISLAM and NEWS

When we cite a news article that has spread everywhere, we often stop at mentioning an “authentic” website. Yet we overlook the fact that these **so-called verified reports may originate from fasiqoon**. How, then, can we place our trust in them at the very outset? What of their ulterior motives, their hidden agendas?

We read, we sift through articles, and then, congratulations, we claim to have formed an independent opinion. No; our discourse remains shaped by them, framed within their boundaries. And in the garb of “helping you,” do they not, in fact, manufacture collective despair?

*O you who have believed, if there comes to you a **disobedient** one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful.*

# News and Islamic Methodology

- Isnad as an Epistemological Principle
- Integrity and Accuracy of the Transmitter
- Transparency and Continuity of Transmission
- Corroboration and Collective Verification
- Conceptual Coherence and Content Analysis
- Detection of Concealed Distortion
- Ethics of Transmission
- Information as Trust and Accountability

We need to ask ourselves: are we **merely contributing to noise?** Yes, conversation is happening, but only conversation is happening. How much change do we truly see?

# Despair and Mechanics of Crime

- **In surah Burooj**, Allah condemns oppression by first establishing faith through the imagery of the vast sky and its fixed constellations, which appear ordered yet are destined to be torn apart. **In the same way, systemic oppression may look structured and enduring, but it too is fated to collapse.**
- **Allah does not delve into the mechanics of crime**, nor into its details or intricacies. Instead, it shields the believer from despair.
- **Out of twenty-two verses in Surah Al-Burooj, Allah speaks of oppression in only four.** The rest are anchored in faith., protecting from despair. It does not breed defeatist mindset.
- Contemporary so-called professional articles focus on stating facts, detailing the crime, and naming the parties involved. But how many are faith-based? **Where is eeman in the Muslim cause, in shaping sociological perception?**

# Conclusion

- *We are not opposed to standing for haqq and raising our voices.*
  - But do not mistake noise for substance!
  - **Not every matter requires public amplification;** responsibility lies in discerning what truly benefits the Ummah.
  - **Work can be done without public spectacle,** without being absorbed into the noise of media discourse.
  - To speak is not enough, our words must carry weight, and fidelity to Islam.
- By fixating on secular language, we remove Islam from the narrative.
  - **How can we represent ourselves as Muslims if our theology, our practices, and our beliefs are explained in secular terms?**
  - Secular arguments have no premise, no grounding; they shift endlessly, chasing fancies in the garb of rights. If one argument fails, another is tried, and another still. In that cycle, we risk justifying what is haram, normalising concepts that stand against our faith.

# Jazakum Allahu Khayran Katheeran

**Stay in Moral Touch**



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