

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

تَبَرَّكَ اسْمُ
رَبِّكَ
ذِي الْجَلَلِ
وَالْأَكْرَامِ

THY NAMES

99

ASMA 'UL HUS'NA

A Submission from
Abdun Noor

“Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: for Thou art the
All-Hearing, The All-Knowing.” (Al-Qur'an 2.127)



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رَبَّنَا آتِنَا
فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً
وَّفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً
وَّقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

*Rabbana Atina
fid-dunya hasanatan
wa-fil -akhi-rati hasanatan
wa -qina adhaban-nar
(Al-Baqarah 2.201)*

Our Lord, give us (the best) of this world
and (the best) of the Life to Come, and
protect us from the Hellfire!”
(Al-Baqarah 2.201)

Commentary 01

When we read Al-Qur'an, either we read it only for the blessing, even though we do not know the meaning of the Ayat that we read; or we read it and enjoy every word that we read because we are aware that Allah is talking to us, although it is not through revelation. It is the greatest joy and bliss for those of us whom Allah has blessed that we read Al-Qur'an and feel that every cell of our body is receiving the healing, the light, the mercy and the guidance. Such a unique feeling uplifts our soul to ascend high until it envisions the unimaginable joy, entertainment and infinite happiness that Allah promised in Al-Jannah.

There is no doubt that reading Al-Qur'an in Arabic has a different taste. Arabic is a very rich language and that is why Allah chose it to be the language of His last Divine Book. The jewels of the Arabic language, although all languages are created by Allah, makes the reader of Al-Qur'an to enjoy the language itself and the landscaping of what every word of Al-Qur'an portrays. Therefore, the unique characteristics of the Arabic language qualified it to be the instrument through which Allah's words are recited around the globe.

Allah confirmed in Al-Qur'an that He has *Al-'Asma' Al-Hus'na*, meaning the best names and attributes. He invited us to call upon Him through His names. Although there are authentic references that Allah has 100 names minus 1, yet the actual number of 'Asma'u Allahi 'Al-Hus'na is only known to Him. Every Muslim, not only has to call upon Allah through His names, but must believe that His names and attributes are not similar to those of the humans, and none of His names must be assigned to any human being.

When we call upon Allah using His name *As-Samee*, meaning the All-hearing, we envision that Allah hears not only our voice calling Him, but at the same time He hears all humans that are calling Him, as well as the Angels, the Jinn, the animals, the birds, the insects, the plants, the fish, etc. All are His creatures, and are fully dependant upon Him. In addition, it is our firm belief that not only Allah hears all sounds at the same time, He knows each voice and who is calling upon Him.

Yet, all His *Asma'uAllah Al Hus'na* and *Sifat*, meaning Names and Attributes are continuously active. Those who are suffering from pain ask Allah by referring to His Name *Ash-Shafi*, meaning the One Who Heals to heal them, while others who are in need for sustenance call upon Allah by referring to His Name *Ar-Razaq*, meaning the Sustainer and the Provider. As such, 'Asma'ulAllah Al Hus'na functions all as one integrated unit. None of Allah's Names and Attributes is idle.

Therefore, as Muslims, we must believe in the unity of ‘Asma’ulAllah ‘Al Hus’na. Allah’s Names and Attributes are His and only His. None of these names can be given to any human being.

Allah is different than His creatures. In Al-Qur’an, Allah Says:

“The Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has made for you mates from yourselves, and for ‘Aln’aam (camels, cows, sheep and goat) mates. By this He means He creates you (in the wombs). There is nothing like Him; and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.” (Ash-Shura: 11).

Once Allah is compared to His creatures, it becomes easy for people to believe that He can have a son, daughter, spouse, partner or equal. As Muslims, we believe that Allah Has His own perfect names and attributes. Yet, He gave some of His names and attributes to some humans. For example: Allah Says:

“Then he conceived fear of them. They said: “Fear not. And they gave him glad tidings of a son having knowledge (about Allah and His religion of monotheism.” (Surah Ath-Thariyat: 28).

Therefore, every Muslim must be fully aware that although Allah gave some of His names and attributes to some humans, there must be no doubt that both names and attributes are not the same. What a human has of any of His names and attributes is given as a bounty from Allah. As such, the name and the attribute that the human has are created and anything that is being created has a beginning and must have an end.

Allah who granted such a name and attribute to the human is truly the Creator and the Giver. Furthermore, we must believe that every creature has a beginning and an end. Allah neither has a beginning nor an end. All creatures are completely dependent on Allah. No creature is independent in any matter; small or big. Any independence for any creature simply means that it falls beyond Allah’s domain.

If it falls outside Allah’s domain, then it becomes a partner, a rival or an equal to Him. This negates the essence of Tawhid, meaning the Oneness of Allah in His perfect Names and Attributes, His *Rububiah*, meaning Lordship, as well as His *Ulohiah*, meaning dedicating worship to Allah alone.

Al-Qur’an openly invites us to apply our intellect and common sense before making our judgment and final conclusion about Him or the universe that we are part of it. For example Allah asks us in Al-Qur’an the following question:

“Is, then, He Who creates comparable to any (being) that cannot create? Will you not, then, bethink yourselves?” (An-Nahl: 17).

Also, Allah asks us another question in Al-Qur’an:

“This is the creation of Allah. So show me that which those (whom you worship) besides Him have created. No, the Thalimon (the polytheists, the wrong-doers and those who do not believe in the Oneness of Allah) are in plain error.” (Luqman: 11).

Therefore, when studying any perfect name and attribute of Allah, we must not forget that any of His names and attributes is part of His Self. None of these names or attributes is separable from Him. In fact, each name and attribute is a perfect guide to His self. Yet, knowing the names, believing in the names, and acting in accordance with the domain of each name, is what will strengthen our belief and bring us peace, trust, mercy and tranquility in this life. If we carry this with us throughout this material life and die as such, it becomes a safe path to Al-Jannah, meaning The Paradise.

That is exactly what the Hadith which Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated where Ar-Rasool Sala Allahu ‘alayhi wasallam (peace and blessings be upon him) said that Allah has ninety nine names; whoever knows them and acts in accordance to them will enter Al-Jannah (mentioned also by At-Tirmizi). Al-Bukhari and Muslim also mentioned that Allah has one hundred names except one; whoever knows them and acts in accordance to them will be admitted into Al-Jannah.

It is worth mentioning that the Hadith does not limit Allah’s names to ninety nine only. The only one who knows the number of the names as well as all the names is Allah Himself.

Therefore, no one can limit Allah’s perfect names and attributes to only ninety nine names. The other fact about the Hadith is that not all the names are mentioned in Al-Qur’an. Some names are not in Al-Qur’an. For example the name: ‘As-Saboor’, meaning that ‘the One who has too much patience’ is not mentioned in Al-Qur’an. Yet, it is included in the ninety nine names.

There are many Ayat in Al-Qur’an that refers to Allah’s attribute of patience. For example, we read in Al-Qur’an:

“And if Allah were to seize mankind for their wrong-doing, He would not leave on it (the earth) a single moving (living) creature, but He postpones them for an appointed term and when their term comes, neither can they delay nor can they advance it an hour.” (An-Nahl: 61).

Another example is His name: ‘The Healer’. It is mentioned in an authentic Hadith recorded by Al-Bukhari and Muslim that Rasulu Allah (peace be upon him) prayed to Allah:

‘Heal, You are the Healer; no healer except You’.

We read in Al-Qur’an about our covenant:

“And (remember) when your Rab brought forth from the children of Adam, from their loins, their seed (or from Adam’s loin his offspring) and made them testify as to themselves (saying): ‘Am I not your Rab?’ They said: ‘Yes! We testify,’ lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: ‘Verily, we have been unaware of this.’” (Al-’Araf: 172).

Therefore, the ultimate goal of knowing the perfect names and attributes of Allah is to submit fully to Him and follow His manual; i.e., Al-Qur’an and the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Fulfilling monotheism in the three categories of Tawheed: *Tawheed Ar-Ruboobiah*, meaning Allah is the Owner and the Only One Who is taking care of all His creatures; *Tawheed Al-’Asma’ wa As-Sifat*, meaning His perfect names and attributes are part of Him and no creature must be given any of His names as equal to Him; and *Tawheed ‘Al-Uloohiah*, meaning all kinds of worship and supplication as well as needs must be dedicated only to Him.

When calling upon Allah through His perfect names and attributes we must be confident that Allah will answer back to our call. For Him to answer and honor our call we must respond to Him through complete surrender and obedience.

In this regard, Allah Says:

“And when My ‘Ibady’, ‘all mankind’, ask you (O Muhammad (peace be upon him) concerning Me, I am indeed near. I respond to the supplication of the supplicant when he calls on Me. So let them obey Me and believe in Me, so that they may be led aright.” (Al-Baqarah: 186).

Allah wants us to call on Him for our needs. We are poor and are in continuous need for His help; let it be for sure that we trust Allah and do believe that His promise to respond to our call is true. Part of our Tawheed, is to have a complete trust in Allah. At the same time, we must fulfill our obligation and commitment to Allah so that He Will honor His promise to us.

Allah reminds us how to fully submit to Him:

“Say (O Muhammad (peace be upon him) ‘verily, my Salat (prayer), my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for Allah, the Rab of all the worlds. He has no partner, and of this I have been commanded, and I am the first of the Muslims’ ”. (Al-’An’ am 162-163).

In the light of the above, it is clear that this book of ‘Thy Names’ on the broad theme of Asma’ul Allah ‘al-Husna, written by Dr. Abdun Noor, is a valuable contribution to help Muslims who do not know the Arabic language to dig deep into this treasure to help them be in constant and in the right connection with Allah.

The constant and right connection with Allah by calling upon Him through His perfect names and attributes will not only help them overcome the hardships of this life, but rather will help them to honor and fulfill their original covenant which they voluntary gave to Allah.

When we dedicate our Salah, rituals, life, death to Allah, He will grant us a life free from grief and fear. In the hereafter, He will admit us in Al-Jannah.

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رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا
بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا
وَهَبْ لَنَا
مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً
إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ

*Rabbana la-tuzigh qulubana bada idh-
hadaytana wa-hab lana mil-ladunka
rahmatan, innaka antal-wahhab.
(Al-Imran 3.8)*

Our Lord, do not our hearts go astray after
You have guided us, and grant us mercy from
Yourself. You grant mercy without measure.”
(Al-Imran 3:8)

Foreword 02

In the Name of Al-Wadud and Al- Waliyy, the Lover, Protector, Sustainer of Al-Walayah, mutual love, protection, and support.

There is a saying of the Messenger (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) that proclaims: There are 99 Names for Allah the Exalted, whom so ever ‘internalizes’ them, shall enter the Paradise. The word internalize is used here to represent the Arabic word, *Ihsa*.

As Dr. Abdun Noor, the author of the present book ‘Thy Names’ suggests, Arabic words are rich, complex, with multidimensional meaning, particularly those of the Quran and the sayings of the Messenger. Much like ideograms, they convey ideas. Rendering them into another language often requires multiple words. Arab linguists suggest that the word *Ihsa* refers to a comprehensive knowledge of a thing, phenomenon, or an idea, then firmly believing and holding on to this knowledge, protecting it as if imprinted on the heart, and having so much certainty in that knowledge to map it one-on-one onto external action and behavior (See footnote 1).

The word *Ihsa* is the axis of this saying. It starts with the understanding of the Names, remembrance through repetition, complete perception and cognition of every one of the Names by the heart, and then acting and behaving in such a way that reflects this knowledge. The interior, the heart, cognates, preserves; the exterior articulates the Names in action and behavior. It is at this point when the process of *Ihsa* is completed. It is at this point that the possessor of this intimate knowledge-- that is not only knowing the Names but actualizing them in one’s life-- is said to enter the Paradise.

But what could this imply for one’s life on the earth? Perhaps one dimension of it is that the person’s life on this plane of existence will come to possess and reflect the attributes of life in Paradise. Among these is what the Quran describes as a life in which there is peace and tranquility; there is no *khawf* (fear), no *hozn* (sadness). In the language of Quran, *khawf* is the fear of future because in ordinary life an unknown future creates uncertainty which in turn leads to fear and anxiety. *Hozn* is the result of regrets over the past which, if serious enough, leads to depression. These are elements that plague humans on this plane of existence.

They are all the root causes of hatred, greed, and injustice, very unbecoming attributes of a race of creatures whom the Supreme Creator praised Himself for creating; those who in the words of one of the most important contemporary Islamic scholars, Dr. Sayyid Hossein Nasr, are the ‘crowning achievement of creation’. These attributes are alien to the primordial natures (*fitrah*), with which humans are created. They are unworthy of the lofty human state.

The intimate knowledge of the Beautiful Names not only informs one of the attributes of the Creator, but also enlightens one, of the ideal human state. That enlightened state itself becomes a reflection of the life in Paradise. In short, those with intimate knowledge of the Beautiful Names ‘shall today have joy in whatever they do’ (Surah Yasin: 55). For a person who understands, internalizes and actualizes the Names, future becomes a source of opportunity, not fear; the past becomes a source of learning, not regret; and the present not a source of anxiety, but one of servitude to the Supreme Creator and service to mankind. For example: intimate knowledge of the name Al-Waliyy actualized leads to becoming one’s brother and sister’s keeper, protector and supporter. The first step in gaining an intimate knowledge of the Beautiful Names is learning them, their meanings, and functions.

The present book titled ‘Thy Names’, by Dr. Abdun Noor, is a rare contribution among the few books on the topic of the Beautiful Names in English. Even a cursory reading of it shows what a serious labor of love it has been for its author. He has constructed a beautiful mosaic reflecting exactitude of an analyst, probing attention of a seeker, empathetic understanding of a lover, and articulation of a poet.

The fountainhead of the author’s grasp of the material is a rich tapestry of the relevant verses of the Quran and the sayings of the one perfect human selected to receive and deliver the Message of the Supreme Creator. Clearly, both sources have provided a strong platform for the author to grasp and articulate the intuitive dimensions of the Beautiful Names. He has spread a generous table of sumptuous morsels from the blessings of Al-Wadud and has invited the readers and the seekers to partake from it with wonder and joy.

May his Merciful Lord reward him for his labor of love.

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Footnote 1: (See, Ibn Mandhur, *Lisan il Arab*, Qum, Iran: Adab i al-hawzah publisher, Vol. 14, p. 184, 1984. Also, Mustafawi, *Al Tahqeeq Fi Kalamat i al-Quran*, Tehran, Iran: Ministry of Culture and Guidance, vol. 1, pp.237-38, 2004.)

Preface 03

More than one hundred and fifty times, Allah the Exalted, has affirmed in *Al-Qur'an* that He is *Al-Aleem*, meaning the All-Knowing. Over ninety times, He has conveyed that He is *Ar-Raheem*, meaning the Dispenser of Grace; He is *Al-Hakeem*, meaning the Wise; He is *Al-Ghafur*, meaning the Truly Forgiving and He is *Al-Aziz*, meaning the Almighty. More than forty times, He has assured us that He is *Ar-Rahman*, The Most Merciful; *As-Sami*, the All Hearing; *Al-Basir*, the All Seeing; and *Al-Khabeer*, the All Aware.

Those nine names are the attributes of Allah that reflect His quality, His glory and His majesty. Those are mentioned in *Al-Qur'an* as *Al-Asma'ul Hus'na*. Muhammad Asad, the author of the "The Meanings of *Qur'an*", observed "the combination of *al-asma' al-husna* may be appropriately rendered as 'the attributes of perfection' -- a term reserved in the *Qur'an* for God Alone". Hasan Guy Eaton, a Muslim scholar noted that "the ninety-nine names of God", are the expressions "through which the *Qur'an* delineates the qualities of the Divine and the relationship which the Creator has with His creation". Many books and manuals have been written on *Al-Asma'ul Hus'na* over the past fifteen centuries. Observations from such scholarly works could be credited collectively as having a pivotal impact on our current Islamic theology.

Tradition has bestowed upon us ninety-nine such attributes. I wished to study the significance and meanings of each of the ninety-nine attributes. During my studies I noted that different scholars have rendered the meaning of each attribute, often with varying combinations of English words. This is certainly expected, given the fact that each attribute noted in *Al-Qur'an* comprises many shades of deep meaning. Arabic, being a very rich language, was able to capture all such shades of meaning, which are often difficult to clearly elucidate in English, which is today the global language of communications of millions of Muslims coming from a wide range of social and cultural milieu.

Rendering the meaning of each of the attribute from Arabic to English was undoubtedly a complex intellectual task. As an example, let us review the rendering of the attribute *As-Samad*, one of the remaining ninety attributes, successively by nine scholars. Each of the scholars have rendered *Al-Qur'an* into English, contemporary to their time.

John M. Rodwell (1861) rendered *As-Samad* as 'God the Eternal.'; Muhammad Ali (1917) rendered *As-Samad* as 'He on Whom all Depend'; Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthal (1930) rendered *As-Samad* as 'The eternally besought of all'; A.J. Arberry (1955) translated *As-Samad* as 'The Everlasting Refuge'; Muhammad Zafrullah Khan translated *As-Samad* as 'Allah, The Self-Existing and Besought of all'; Farooqi Azam Malik (1997) rendered *As-Samad* as 'Allah is the Self-Sufficient'; the co-translators

AbdalHaqq and Aisha Bewley (1999) conveyed As-Samad as 'The Everlasting Sustainer of all'; while Laleh Bakhtiar (2007), translated As-Samad as 'God, the Everlasting'.

I have depended exclusively on the rendering in English of Al-Qur'an by five scholars for my humble present work on 'Thy Names'. Those scholars have carried out their work over a span of eighty years. Allama Yusuf Ali (1934), an eminent public administrator of the Indian Subcontinent, maintained in his English renderings the classical style of Arabic of Al-Qur'an. N. J. Dawood (1956) appears to have been the first Arab, whose mother tongue was Arabic, to have translated the Al-Qur'an into English. Al-Hajj Talim Ali (1985), an American convert whose mother tongue was English, rendered Al-Qur'an in its simplest English words, which even a child, could understand. Professor Ahmed Ali (1988), a scholar from Pakistan, strived to render Al-Qur'an in contemporary English. Muhammad Asad (2003), a Polish teacher, rendered the Al-Qur'an in English earlier in 1980, but subsequently in 2003 fully revised and updated his earlier version, which is now available to the reader.

Muhammad Asad, a convert to Islam in 1917, acquired proficiency in Arabic and English by living within the milieu of the respective cultures. He is the only non-Arab translator who has spent a lifetime with Arabs and Bedouins in an effort to comprehend and interpret the nuances of the original Arabic spoken during the time of the Prophet.

This distinct group of scholars has conveyed the meaning of As-Samad, also with differing composition of English words. 'Allah, The Eternal, Absolute' is the rendering by Yusuf Ali, followed with 'The Eternal God', as the interpretation of NJ Dawood. 'God is the Source' is the interpretation of Talim Ali, followed by 'God, the immanently indispensable' by Ahmed Ali. A distinguishing tenor emanates from Muhammad Asad when he rendered As-Samad as 'The Uncaused cause of all that exists'. Each of the renderings, nevertheless, carries the thread of a uniform universal message. Allah, the Exalted, knows what could have been the correct rendering.

Al-Qur'an is the Message of Almighty Allah for the entire humanity. The language of Al-Qur'an is Arabic. For those whose mother tongue is not Arabic, and do not understand or speak Arabic, the language itself creates a barrier to correct understanding of the Message.

Almighty Allah has directed that the Divine Message should be presented in the language of the addressee. "We have sent every Messenger with revelation in the language of his people that he might make it clear to them" (Surah Ibrahim 14: 4). This *Ayah*, traditionally interpreted as verse, conveys that each Muslim has an obligation to present the message of Allah in the language of the people to whom the Message is being presented. Many devoted ibaad, traditionally interpreted as the worshipper of God, have served this obligation on behalf of their own society via their incessant efforts to render Al-Qur'an in the language of their own people. Translations

into many languages across the globe have facilitated the understanding of Al-Qur'an among the humanity. May Allah be pleased with their scholarly efforts over the past centuries.

The methodology of my analytical study for 'Thy Names' was very simple. From a vast collection of Islamic literatures on the theme of Asma'ul Hus'na, I have concentrated on the works of six authors (see footnote 24 of Introduction). Each author quoted for most *asmaa*, either the related *ayat* of Al-Qur'an referring to the attribute or noted the number of use of that attribute in Al-Qur'an. The six authors I concentrated on often cited the same set of *ayat* as others for some attributes, while also citing different *ayah* for the other attributes. I compiled for each attribute, a composite list of all cited *ayat*.

I studied Al-Qur'an searching *ayat* for each of the ninety-nine attributes. I read the set of *ayat* of the composite list, which either quote or refer to the theme of the attribute in Al-Qur'an in Arabic, augmented by the transliterations in Roman scripts. I wished to learn under which specific context Allah the Exalted assigned such attributes to Himself. Having done so, as a humble researcher, I wished to reflect on each *ayah* from the perspective of my limited knowledge and note my own reflections. I used as my basic reference the works of Muhammad Eliasi, and Muhammad Asad, which contain the verses of Al-Qur'an side by side with its roman transliteration, and its English translations. Asad also provides additional explanatory notes.

Moreover, I concentrated on the meaning of each *ayah* for each attribute, as rendered by five recognized scholars. I compared the rendering of each author for each specific *ayah*. As a researcher, I assumed that each of the scholars has utilized his full professional competence to ensure the accuracy and quality of their respective rendering. I have no competence in judging either merit or quality of their respective translation. Therefore, I have not taken the liberty of judging the quality of such renderings. However, I have made a personal choice among the five renderings. Amongst them, I have chosen the ones that relate to my mind and appeal to my heart.

Upon completion of each steps for each attribute I jotted down my own reflections as a summary note for my understanding and for my subsequent queries. I consulted with esteemed scholars, colleagues, and friends. I revised my reflections, as often as Allah the Exalted permitted me. Finally, I summed up my reflections and understandings in the form of a *Munajat*, as a tool for my humble communication to Allah.

My hope was that by undertaking this admittedly limited analytical process I might be able to inspire many more non-Arabic speaking Muslims like me, to undertake their own individual journeys of deeper reading and understanding of Al-Qur'an. Gaining our own knowledge by reading Al-Qur'an in its original classical language, with its full meaning, certainly leads us on a long and blissful journey.

I realize that I have drawn my compilations, and nurtured my reflections, on a very narrow horizon, mainly due to limitations in my knowledge and grasp of Arabic. I am

not a scholar on Islam, nor am I versed in Arabic. Thus, I humbly request my readers to understand my current work within this limitation and help me to broaden my understandings with their advice and guidance.

On this journey, many scholars have held my hand and guided me. Dr. Anwar Habbaj, an eminent scholar and Professor of Islamic Studies of American Open University, encouraged my quest to search for the meanings of Asma'ul Hus'na, from the very beginning, and guided me at every crossroads. Dr. Abbas Mirakhor, an eminent economist and an authority on Islamic Banking and Finance, engaged me to realize the sublime meanings of Al-Qur'an and led me to new ways of presenting the meanings. Dr. Mustafa Al-Azami, an eminent scholar on the history of compilation of Al-Qur'an, read an earlier version of my work, and guided me on my journey. Professor Nurul Islam, an eminent economist and scholar, guided me with the initial focus and format of this study. Imam Faizul R. Khan reviewed the entire manuscript for its consistency of contents.

Many of my colleagues and friends have extended their advice and provided constructive thoughts. Among them are included Amr Abdallah, Mustafa Zaman Abbasi, Muhammad Babar, Richard Cambridge, Fakhruzzaman Chowdhury, Kamaluddin Chowdhury, Yahaya Doka, Don Foster, Muhammad Muhsin, Abdel-Aziz Mustafa, Abu Reza and my own Physician Charles B. Abrams. Their frequent conversations and comments have helped me to open my mind to search for the correct path. Azizul Jalil has edited the entire manuscript, enhanced by the skilled word choices of Zainab Jalil. Jeanette Mallet skillfully oversaw the continuity of the thought processes for each segment of the book and overall chain of communication.

Atiqur Rahman has helped me with the design and layout of the book, designed the graphics, and composed the entire book. He has always remained a source of my personal counsel. The artistic calligraphy of each attribute is the result of the joint collaboration works of Atiqur Rahman and his wife, Yesmin Nahar, also a graduate of the Faculty of Fine Arts of Dhaka University. Their narrative on calligraphy depicting their collective journey for this work, is a source of inspiration for all of us.

My youngest son, Wameek Noor, edited the Preface and Introduction from the perspective of a younger generation born and raised in USA. My eldest son Dr. Waseem Noor, my daughter Nausheen Rimi Noor, and her husband Pritvi Rajkumar have consistently encouraged me to remain steadfast with my research and supported my enduring quest with their inquisitive queries. My wife, Najma Noor, inspired the entire creative process and reviewed the page layout and inspected the color schemes for each name. My brother-in-law Iftikhar Ahmed kept his keen interests alive for this work over the years. Tariq Zaman introduced me to the software mobile Holy Quran developed by www.zoosware.com and teaming up with Omar Zaman updated most of my home office information technologies enhancing the speed and quality of my final editing.

And finally, Mohiuddin Ahmed generously lent his long years of literary and publishing experience for the design of the book, while Badiuddin Nazir adroitly shepherded the book through the complex publication production processes. Moreover, I could not have written this book, without the long and enduring superhuman qualities of patience, my wife Najma Noor rendered, upon me.

Any book written over a long period, despite the best efforts of the collaborating and publication teams acknowledged as above, carries the risks of having errors. Mine is entirely the responsibility for such unintentional errors. I offer to the readers my apologies in advance for such errors and request that they contact me directly with their comments (anoor.cmdp@gmail.com.).

May Allah shower continuously His blessings upon all who have associated themselves selflessly with this work.

I wish to pay my tribute to my uncle Chief Justice Badrul Haider Chowdhury of Bangladesh Supreme Court and to my brother-in-law Sheikh Muhammad Abdun Noor of Bangladesh Postal Service. Both of them, from my very childhood, have conveyed to me in simplest terms the broad principles of Islam and patiently encouraged me to delve deep into the reading of Al-Qur'an . May Allah be pleased with them and grant them *Al-Jannah*.

I wish to dedicate this work for the magferaat of my parents, Sheikh Mohammad Patwari and Nurun Nahar Begum, and to their respective parents; and to the parents of my wife, Khairuddin Ahmad and Nurun Negar Begum and their respective parents. May Allah place all of them in *Jannatul Ferdous*.

Rabbir-ham-humaa Kamaa Rabba-yaani Sagiiraa (17.24)

“My Rab (Lord)! Show them mercy, just as they cared for me (when I was) a little child.” (*Al-Qur'an* 17.24)

Finally, I intend to allocate the sales and proceeds of this humble work received worldwide towards the dawa work being carried out by the American Islamic Information Center initiated and led by Dr. Anwar Hjjaj. In addition, I intend to allocate the sales and proceeds of this humble work, received within Bangladesh, and through the internet, towards the humanitarian work of the Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital, being built at Dhaka.

“Our Rab! Accept (this service) from us: For Thou art the All-Hearing, The All-Knowing” (*Al-Qur'an* 2.127)

Summing up, “Thy Names” is a very simple work of personal reflections, drawn from great original works by many distinguished scholars of Islamic thought. I hope this simple book may encourage other scholars to undertake deeper studies in English for the benefit of non- Arabic speaking Muslims.



Islam has spread all over the globe. Muslims communicating in English currently constitute about an overwhelming majority of about 2 billion Muslims in today's world. They are striving, like me, to understand the simple and deeper messages of Al-Qur'an.

Rabbi Zidnii Ilmii. Please enhance our knowledge. Please enhance our dedications and guide our pursuit for deeper knowledge of our faith.

May this humble work please You and earn Your pleasure. May You bestow Your mercy and endow Your abundant gifts to this humble nest of my daughter and her husband in Dubai from where I am completing this task only for earning Your pleasure. May Your forgiving enrich us, enrich our sons and daughters, enrich members of our respective families, enrich our friends and relatives, enrich our global ummah, and enrich all believers submitting to You across the globe.

Summa Ameen.

Abdun Noor

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Introduction

04

Remembering Allah

The proper name of One God denoted in *Al-Qur'an* is Allah. This proper name had been affirmed 2697 times in *Al-Qur'an* as the name of One God.

In His infinite grace Allah asks us to remember Him. Remembering Allah gives us the inner satisfaction of being remembered by Allah Himself. He has promised us that we shall be infused with peace deep within our hearts in this world. Moreover, He will reward us with our key to peace and happiness for the hereafter.

"Then do ye remember me; I will remember you." (2.152) YA¹

By remembering we mean the act of consciously acknowledging the continuous presence of Allah. He is witnessing all our activities. He asked us to make Thikr. This implies many ways of remembering Allah. We may appeal to Him with our spoken words. We may praise Him by frequently mentioning His name. We may celebrate or commemorate or rehearse His glory. We may treasure the thought of His blessings bestowed upon us at our critical times as our precious possession. We may cherish the memory of good deeds He has enabled us to accomplish. We may express our thanks for the rewards and earnings He has given us, many times, often without our asking.

"O ye who believe! Celebrate the praises of Allah, and do so often: and glorify Him morning and evening." (33.41-42) YA

Making Thikr is a natural impulse of each and every living being. Each of us remembers the Creator in one form or another and seeks blessings and mercy from the Creator. The very act of remembering the Creator in any form activates the faculty of human intellect. Our mind prompts the faculty of the senses, such as hearing, seeing, and reflecting, to ponder the magnificent creative power of the Creator. Our brain injects logic within the inner mind to reflect on the glory of our Creator, as evidenced by this universe, and the thousands of universes beyond our own.

Why should we make Thikr to remember glory of Allah? Allah likes to be glorified.

1. Denote translation of Ayah by Allama Abdullah Yusuf Ali abbreviated as YA. Moreover, the number noted in bracket such as (2.152) denotes that this specific verse noted as ayah is numbered 152 in Surah 2. The *Al-Quran* is organized under 114 Surah. We may designate each Surah as a Chapter. The number of ayat (plural of ayah) in each Surah varies. The shortest Surah is with 3 ayat, while the longest Surah is with 288 ayat. The next ayat quoted as (33.41-42) means these verses have been quoted from Surah 33 and are numbered 41 and 42. The symbolism of ayah is mentioned in note 3 and also explained in the Glossary.

He prefers to be praised by His qualities and attributes. Allah has willed that His *ibaad* shall call upon Him repeatedly. Ibaad is the one who has fully submitted to Allah and, therefore, will of an *ibaadi* is naturally in conformity with the will of Allah.

We are constantly struggling between hope and fear in our lives. Our aspiration to live a happy life in this world is universal. Also universal is the deep desire ingrained in our soul that eventually we shall be blessed with an eternal life in *Jannat*, meaning paradise. We hope that upon our death we will be forgiven for our misdeeds. We hope to be granted entry to the blissful jannat, but we are nonetheless afraid of death. We strive for a external life free of diseases, but we fear disease itself. We fear loss of money and security, but we are unable to endure and exercise the necessary patience.

Our inner satisfaction comes from remembering Allah. Celebrating His praises commences our gradual spiritual journey and results in inner peace, deep in our hearts. When we turn to Allah, our spiritual light shall light. But if we do not, Allah will not force us to light it.

“Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction.” (13.28) YA

We may remember Allah by feeling His constant presence near and around us. We may praise Him with our thoughts, with our written ideas, with our spoken words and with our formal and informal prayers. He has imparted to us the very faculty of articulating thoughts, expressing such thoughts in writing and making audible to others by speech, which He has not bestowed upon any other living creatures, whether they are angels, *jinn*, animals or plants.

“The Most Gracious has imparted this Quran (unto man). He has created man: He has imparted unto him articulate thought and speech.” (55.1-3) MA²

In this ayah the Arabic word *bayan* refers to the power of expression of a human being, denoting the very human ability to produce intelligent speech in his own language. It denotes his skills of understanding the inter-relation of thoughts, and the art of explaining the thoughts to fellow human beings, either through spoken words or writings, or both.

Allah is Beautiful

The expression *Al Asma'ul Hus'na* in Al-Qur'an refers to all beautiful names and qualities belonging to Allah.

“The most beautiful names belong to Allah: so call on Him by them.” (7.180) YA

2. Denote translation by Muhammad Asad, abbreviated as MA. And later the abbreviation LB denotes translation by Laleh Bakhtiar.

We may coin as many beautiful names as we can think of to contemplate blessings from Allah. Al-Qur'an has articulated hundreds of attributes expressing the qualities of Allah. Bringing such attributes to our remembrance is part of our prayer and praise. We realize that to Allah alone belongs all the attributes of perfection. And we could invoke His blessings for us by remembering frequently those attributes.

"Allah! There is no god but He! To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names." (20.8) YA

Worship none but Allah

Tawhid is the principle of unity of One God. In Arabic, *Ilah* means the only One to whom all living beings are inclined. They are in continuous need of Him. *Ilah* is beyond human comprehension, yet the human beings, consciously or unconsciously, cannot be independent of *Ilah*. *Tawhid*, therefore, provides the fundamental basis for law and order of this universe and the universes beyond our knowledge.

Science has shown that there is a pre-determined order for the vast universes, because the rule of nature prevails throughout the entire cosmos. That rule could originate only from one Ruler. He is also the Sustainer of that rule. Al-Qur'an confirms succinctly the principle of unity of One God, the principle of *Tawhid*, many times.

"And your God is One God: there is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful." (2.163) YA

"While there is no god but One God" (5.73) LB

The message given to every Prophet throughout the ages was the necessity of submitting to the Will of One God. No Prophet ever taught polytheism. Humankind, ought not to render any worship or service during their stay on this earth to any imagined entity, other than to divine One God.

"For Allah is One God: Glory be to Him" (4.171) YA

The Unity of God is the realization of end goal of all true spiritual consciousness. Everything in heavens and earth submits to God. The God of humankind is a single God. The principle of unity of God, as a fundamental belief and truth, is common among all divine messages. When an inquisitive mind subjects itself to the logic of human nature, he realizes that the idea of multiple gods competing with each other in heaven, to receive man's worship on earth, is a concept, full of contradictions.

"We sent not before you any Messenger, but We revealed to him: There is no god but I, so worship Me." (21.25) LB

Straying from the principle of *Tawhid* occurs when we attribute divine powers to

any individual mortal, either alive or dead, or to natural objects in the cosmos, such as moon, sun, rain, or imagined deities. This is *shirk*, meaning a straying from the principles of Tawhid, the Oneness of God. Shirk is the act of ascribing divinity to any object, other than the one God, and is a grave sin. Our main objective in this life is *ibadah*, our full submission to the will of Allah.

“And worship God (alone), and do not ascribe divinity, in any way, to aught beside Him.” (4.36) MA

Allah Created Us from a Single Nafs

Allah created all of humanity from a single *Nafs*.

“O Men! Fear your Lord who created you from a single cell and from it created its mate, and from the two of them dispersed men and women (male and females) in multitudes. So fear God in whose name you ask of one another (the bond of) relationships. God surely keep watch over you.” (4.1) AA³

This ayah of Al-Qur’an draws on three key Arabic expressions to articulate the unity of the human race: *nafs*, *zawzjaha*, *minha*. Each Arabic expression carries many shades of meaning, which are difficult to translate in English without relevance to the content itself. Ahmed Ali explains that “*Nafs* means more than one hundred things, including essence, substance, vital principle, blood, etc.” Most Islamic scholars according to Ahmed Ali, explain the *nafs* as ‘the soul’ or ‘a self’ or ‘a person’. Muhammad Asad concurs with Ahmed Ali and observes: “many meanings are attributable to the term *Nafs*. _Soul, spirit, mind, animate beings, living entity, human being, person, self (in the sense of personal identity), human kind, life-essence, vital principles and so forth”.⁴

Explaining the specific meaning of *nafs* for this ayah Asad noted “Most of the classical commentators choose ‘human being’ and assumed that it refers here to Adam.” Muhammad Abdu, a scholar, preferred the meaning ‘human kind’, in as much as this term stresses the common origin and brotherhood of the human race which undoubtedly is the purport of the above verse. Asad concluded that “My rendering of *Nafs* in this context is as ‘living entity.’”

Ahmed Ali further broadens the concept by explaining *nafs* as a cell. ‘A cell is a complete unit, in itself a *nafs*.’⁵ Ahmed Ali observes “*Nafs* means more than one hundred things, including essence, substance, vital principle, blood, etc, it has enough

3. Denote translation by Ahmed Ali, abbreviated as AA. We have often used the word ‘verse’ for translating Ayah. However, a few Muslim scholars observe that the word verse is not equivalent to Ayah, because Ayah is Allah’s word or creation that no human being is able to duplicate. Abdun Noor

4. Muhammad Asad, See footnote 1 related with Ayah 4.1 on page 117.

5. Ahmed Ali: see footnote 2 related with ayah 4.1 on page 96.

amplitude to include ‘cell’ among its meanings, the concept of cell being unknown to ancient etymologists to be identified by them, but having been made clear by modern science. One of the many functions of cells is to produce hormones which govern every aspect of human experience...the cellular origin of sexes also gives absolute equality to women, which is emphasized throughout the Qur’an.”⁶

The second key expression is *zawzjaha*. Asad observed that “the term “*zawj* (a pair, one of a pair, or a mate) applies to the male as well as to the female component of a pair or couple; hence with reference to human beings, it signifies a women’s mate (husband) as well as a man’s mate (wife).”⁷

The third expression is *minha*. Asad noted that “the literal translation of *minha* as ‘out of it’ clearly alludes, in conformity with the text, to the biological fact that both sexes have originated from ‘one living entity’.”⁸ “He created out of it (*minha*) its mate.”⁹ *Minha* may also mean that his spouse was created from the same substance that he was created.

Allah has created pairs of opposite nature amongst all created objects. In Al-Qur’an affirmations on pairing, apply to all of humanity irrespective of color or creed. Such affirmations on pairs are not addressed to a specific community, but directed to all of humankind. This direction covers each race, each faith, and each nation, equally.

“He Who created all the pairs, and assigned for you boats, and flocks on which you ride, so that you may sit upon their backs; then you may remember the divine blessings of your Lord. “(43.12-13) LB

Evidence of Allah’s act of pairing prevails from time immemorial. We see pairs throughout His creation: among human being, among animal life, among plant life, among microorganisms, and among animate and inanimate objects. Allah asks humanity to think about why all things the earth produces have been created in pairs, and thereby ponder the logic for such pairing.

“And it is He who has spread the earth wide and placed on it firm mountains and running waters, and created thereon two sexes of every (kind of) plant; (and it is He who) causes the night to cover the day. Verily, in all this there are messages indeed for people who think!” (13.3) MA

Why have all things the earth produces had been created in pairs?

“And God has given you mates of your own kind and has given you, through your

6. Review discussions by Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Asad.

7. Muhammad Asad, again see footnote 1 for Ayah 4.1. Also see Ayah 13.3 footnote 7 on page 399 for an elaborate explanation of the term *zawj*. For a fuller understanding of the words underpinning *nafs* I suggest to the inquisitive reader, that he or she study the notes by both authors.

8. Muhammad Asad, footnote 1 on page 117

9. Muhammad Asad, again footnote 1 on page 117

mates, children and children's children, and has provided for you sustenance out of good things in life." (16.72) MA

Allah pairs human beings. From the same nafs, mates have been designated for each other. Originating from the same nafs men and women demonstrate a complementary nature. Both have similar moral, religious and familial duties. Men and women are companions to each other. Both are responsible for raising a family together. Both men and women have similar physical and biological structures. But, because of their interlinked duties with respect to biological reproduction for continuation of creation, they differ in their sex organs.

Women are not a source of all earthly evil and temptations, as evil and temptation also persist among men. Rather, women represent *ni'ma*, a mercy from Allah. In her womb each female preserves the *rahma*, the very wherewithal, to bring progeny to the world to continue human heritage.

"With it have We produced diverse pairs of plants each separate from the others." (20.53) YA

Similarly, Allah has paired plants. Plants, like animals, have their own reproductive apparatus: male stamens and female pistils. Every kind of plant preserves opposite sexes is a botanical fact and fully in accord with modern science. Among the cotton plant, the male and female organs of reproduction exist together in one or the same flower of the plant. Among cucurbitaceous plants, they are placed in separate flowers of one or same plant.

The pairs carry the ability to complement each other's nature and provide together, over a period of gestation, their own progeny, as their heritage for the future. The pairing of mankind, of animals, of plants, and of other created beings, is a conscious creative process. Allah instructed Prophet Noah (pbuh) to fill his boat with pairs of each kind of living object. The Creator decided to preserve living creation till the time of infinity via the process of joining pairs.

The principle of pairing, also applies to animate objects. Such pairing among animate objects complements and completes each element of nature. Matter is constituted of a pair of opposite energies. Electricity has both positive and negative forces to sustain itself. Magnetic forces are paired similarly. Each atom is positively charged with a nucleus of protons covered by negatively charged electrons. Daylight that brings sunshine is also shadowed by night. Both phenomena are required to complement the functioning of the universe.

"Limitless in His glory is He who has created opposites in whatever the earth produces, and in men's own selves, and in that of which (as yet) they have no knowledge." (36.36) MA

The Unity of the Human Races

Allah declares the unity of the human races, frequently, in Al-Qur'an.

"Verily, (O you who believe in Me,) this community of yours is one single community, since I am the Sustainer of you all: worship, then, Me (alone!) (21.92) MA

Al-Qur'an conveys that the entire community of human race is related. The guidance affirms also repeatedly the equality between a male and a female.

"O men! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all aware." (49.13) MA

Allah is the God of mankind. In the preceding ayah, He addresses all mankind. All of mankind is descended from a single pair of parents. 'We have created every one of you out of a father and mother' is the literal meaning.¹⁰

The biological origin of every human being is undeniable, irrespective of faith, culture, race, or nationality. Nor can we deny the equality with which Allah endowed both women and men in terms of bringing forth their progeny on earth. Nor may we escape the fact that the rearing of progeny brings to zenith the equality of human dignity shared by all mankind, irrespective of color, gender or creed.

Humanity is comprised of people with different ways of life, with distinctive temperaments, and with rich varied heritages. Different tribes, nations, and races have evolved over a long period of time. Over the ages, man has adopted distinctive human characteristics suited to changing climates and have acquired skills to assure their survival in the different geographical areas.

Diversity among humanity is a means to foster better appreciation of contributions between people. The purpose of such diversity is to pursue greater knowledge. Diversity encourages us to know each other's heritage, acquire a better understanding of each other's traditions and values, and cultivate the universal mission of the oneness of humanity.

Allah has created distinctions between the nations and races. Such distinctions are the vehicle for articulating respect and safeguarding each other's human dignity. Consequently, such distinctions ought not to become an excuse to spread estrangement and violence amongst each other. Superiority of one race over the other depends entirely on their sincere observation of complete submission to Allah, their duty and their moral guidance, rather than on their wealth, race, or nationality.

10. Muhammad Asad. For further explanations on the theme of Oneness and Uniqueness of God and all of us belonging to one human family, see footnote 89 related with Ayah 21.92 on page 557, together with footnotes 15 and 16 related with Ayah 49.13 on page 904.

Al-Qur'an condemns any sort of prejudice among humanity, whether racial, national or tribal. Islamic scholars affirmed repeatedly that all of mankind belongs to one human family without any inherent superiority of one over another. The one who is most righteous gets the most honors. Al-Qur'an encourages human beings, irrespective of their caste or creed, to acquire the most honors by vying with one another through good deeds.

All Prophets, peace be upon them, over all ages, had brought their people the same basic tenets of faith. These tenets apply unequivocally to all humanity. There is none but One God. He runs the universe and sustains humanity. All prophets are mortals. They have successively strived to arouse consciousness among their own people of their inherent mortality. All mortals shall eventually return to none but One God.

"(Allah) said: 'Get ye down, with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling place and your means of livelihood-for a time.' He said: 'Therein shall ye live, and therein shall ye die, but from it shall ye be taken out (at last) (7.24-25) YA

Al-Qur'an speaks repeatedly of the children of Adam. With such word Al-Qur'an refers to the whole of the human race bringing into its fold every human being on this earth.

"And whenever thy Sustainer brings forth their offspring from the loins of the children of Adam, He (thus) calls upon them to bear witness about themselves: Am I not your Sustainer? - to which they answer: Yea, indeed, we do bear witness thereto!" 7.172 (MA)

Unity with Diversity for Humanity

The oneness of humanity is the greatest truth upon which Al-Qur'an lays the highest emphasis. We noted earlier that Allah has evolved all of humanity from a single nafs. They have descended from the same pair of parents belonging to opposite sexes. They all have been asked to dwell in one home - the same earth as their resting place, and share a common sky as a canopy. They shall all gain the reward of 'entry to heaven' as their pivotal recognition for submitting to Allah and carrying out good deeds. They all face similar free choices in their earthly lives. They all decide their individual destiny out of their own free choice.

"All mankind were once one single community; (then they began to differ-) whereupon God raised up the prophets as heralds of glad tidings and as warners, and through them bestowed revelation from on high, setting forth the truth, so that it might decide between people with regard to all on which they had come to hold divergent views." (2.213) MA

Humanity, as a creature of endowed intellect, forms a single race serving Allah and

worshipping none but Allah. Allah raised Prophets (pbuh) who spoke the tongue of the people and belonged to the same culture and traditions. Through such Prophets, Allah revealed Himself by means of gradual revelations, to inspire all races of humankind. The divine revelations found expression for all mankind to formulate a universal doctrine of values, morals and justice. Allah guided the Prophets to lead their own people with the revealed divine knowledge and to direct their people on the correct path of human conduct.

*“And had thy Sustainer so willed, He could surely have made all mankind one single community: but (He willed it otherwise, and so) they continue to hold divergent views.” (11.118) MA*¹¹

This unity of humanity recognizes that all humans strive for the good of mankind. Such unity is demonstrated by: (a) continuing diversity of thought, (b) by relative progress towards acquiring knowledge for the well-being of humanity; and (c) by pursuit of moral causes espoused by various human heritages with distinctive cultural practices. Such human ambitions are consistent with the oneness of Allah.

Muhammad Asad observes “Thus, *Qur’an* stresses once again that the unceasing differentiation in men’s views and ideas is not incidental but represents a God-willed, basic factor of human existence. If God had willed that all human beings should be of one persuasion, all intellectual progress would have been ruled out, and ‘they would have been similar in their social life to the bees and the ants, while in their spiritual life they would have been like the angels, constrained by their nature always to believe in what is true and always to obey God’ (Manar X11, 193) – That is to say, devoid of that relatively free will which enables man to choose between right and wrong and thus endows his life- in distinction of all other sentient beings _with a moral meaning and a unique intellectual potential.”¹²

“And (know that) all mankind were once but one single community, but only later did they begin to hold divergent views. And had it not been for a decree that had already gone forth from thy Sustainer, all their differences would have been settled from the outset.” (10.19) MA

The principles related to the unity of mankind are mentioned frequently in Al-Qur’an. The expression *ummatah wahidatan* means one single community bound by mutually accepted moral values. All mankind was created as one. They belong to the same community. Allah’s message to mankind has, in essence, been the same throughout the ages: the message of trusting each other, striving for the common universal goal of preserving humanity, and believing in each other’s good intentions. Selfishness is not an accepted way of pleasing Allah. Despite such caution, egotism does spring up between individuals, races and nations.

11. The concept is implied in the Arabic expression *Ummatah wahidatan*, which will be reviewed in later paragraphs.

12. Muhammad Asad, note 150 related with Ayah 11.118/ 10.19(ck) on pg 374

Men and women, blindly captivated by their own narrow personal aspirations, project their superiority and privileges through the tools of race, nationality and skin color. Yusuf Ali observes “when men began to diverge from one another, Allah made their very differences sub serve the higher ends by increasing their emulation in virtue and piety, and thus pointing back to the ultimate Unity and Reality.”¹³

The inherent ability of the mankind to realize the existence of Allah, in itself, is evidence of the homogeneity of mankind .An understanding of the Oneness and Omnipotence of God is innate in man. Muhammad Asad states “that the ability to realize God’s existence, oneness and omnipotence is innate in man, and that all deviation from the basic perception is a consequence of the confusion brought about by man’s progressive estrangement from the inborn instincts.”¹⁴

“Men should differ in their intellectual approach to the problems touched upon by divine revelation”, Muhammad Asad observed.¹⁵ “If men would have continued to hold from the very outset the same views, such uniformity could have precluded men’s intellectual, moral and social development.” Consequently, Asad further observed “God has left it to their reason, aided by prophetic guidance, gradually to find their way to the truth.”

“For, had God so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community; however, He lets go astray him that wills (to go astray), and guides aright him that wills (to be guided); and you will surely be called to account for all that you ever did” (16.93) MA

The plurality of faiths of the world is a reality. And this is the result of human choice, a fact, which cannot be evaded by any follower of any faith. Al-Qur’an gives us a universal perspective on the origins of plurality of faiths in the human world. If Allah wished, He could have guided all people to *Al-Islam*, yet He left the issue of faith to each individual to choose, emphasizing the choice of free will. He chose *Al-Islam* for people to achieve happiness in this life as well as in the hereafter.

“To each of you We have given a law and a way and a pattern of life. If God pleased He could surely have made you one people (professing one faith). But He wished to try and test you by that which He gave you. So try to excel in good deeds. To Him will you all return in the end, when He will tell you of what you were at variance.” (5.48) AA

Muhammad Asad, alluding to the diverse ways of life on earth, observes that “the basic, unchanging spiritual truths which, according to the *Quran*, have been preached by every one of God’s apostles, while the particular bodies of laws (*shirah* or *shariah*)

13. Yusuf Ali, notes 1406 and 1407 related with Ayah 10.19 on pg 484

14. Muhammad Asad, notes 28 and 29 related with Ayah 10.19 on pages 329-330; see also footnotes 116 and 117 related with Ayah 16.93 on page 457.

15. Muhammad Asad, for a further elaboration see footnote 66 related with Ayah 5.48 on page 178.

promulgated through them and the way of life (*minhaj*), recommended by them, varied in accordance with the exigencies of the time and of each community's cultural development. This 'unity in diversity' is frequently stressed in *Quran*.”¹⁶

“We all believe in one God, who sent messengers for the good of humanity in this world and the hereafter.” said the Custodian of the Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, during the opening address at the World Conference on Dialogue during July 2008 in Madrid.¹⁷ “His will, praise be to Him, was that people should differ in their faiths. If the Almighty has so desired, all mankind would have shared the same religion.”

Confirming this time honored Islamic precept King Abdullah said “this is a message from the Islamic world, representing its scholars and thinkers who recently met in the confines of the House of God.” The King further elaborated the views of the Muslim scholars that gathered in Makkah for the preparation of the conference, by saying: “Islam is a religion of moderation and tolerance; a message that calls for constructive dialogue among followers of religions; a message that promotes to open a new page for humanity in which- God willing- concord will replace conflict.” King Abdullah continued: “We are meeting today to affirm that the religions that God Almighty desired for the happiness of man should be a means to ensure that happiness.”

History has shown that humanity has always held civilized and distinctive cultural heritage and values. Over the ages, people of different ethnicities, cultures, and faiths have co-existed. Collectively, they have advanced the cause of humanity by contributing to each other's culture, by honoring each other's civilizations, and by engaging in scientific development for mutual benefits. What is the common denominator of their bonding? It is the faith of the common people to serve One Supreme God. It is this affirmation of a Supreme Divine Being that has endured the universal value of human justice, moral conduct, condemnation of racism, desire for human friendship, equity for the poor, and care for the distressed. All the Prophets of humanity proclaimed that we are all children of Allah clinging steadfastly to these principles.

“For every community We have ordained certain rites that they may commemorate the name of God by reading it over the cattle We have given them for sacrifice. Your God is one God, so be obedient to Him.” (22.34) AA

Allah turns each of us to a goal. This unity of common purposes and values is esteemed equally within the context of the diversity of races, traditions, and temperaments, and destiny. We are advised:

“Each has a goal to which he turns. So strive towards piety and excel the others: God will bring you together whosoever you be. God has power over every thing.” (2.148) AA

16. Muhammad Asad: note 66 for ayah 5.48, pg 178

17. The King of Saudi Arabia addressed this conference as the Custodian of Holy Mosques.

Charity in Islam is extended to all humanity and not limited to one's own people, or one's own co-religionists. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) often stressed a believer's moral obligation towards his neighbors –whatever is their faith. This is a tradition, which appears to have been followed, exceedingly well, among relatively new nations of Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Lebanon.

“Pay homage to God, and make none His compeer; and be good to your parents and relatives, the orphans and the needy and the neighbors who are your relatives, and the neighbors who are strangers, and the friend by your side, the traveler and your servants and subordinates. God does not surely love those who are arrogant and boastful.” (4.36) AA

Muhammad Asad observed, “The freeing of the human beings from bondage is explicitly mentioned as one of the objectives to which *zakat* funds are to be dedicated”.¹⁸

What, in fact, is the bondage of the human beings today? Is it still slavery of the human races? Yes! Slavery still persists on this earth! For one quarter of the human population, it is their slavery to daily hunger. It is their slavery to lack of access to basic education. It is their slavery to unequal redemption of their basic human needs by society. It is the societal denial to women of her fundamental human rights. It is the denial of equal access to girls of rights of acquiring proper skills, thus negating her ability to make a purposeful contribution to the welfare of her society. It is slavery to the natural elements due to unavailability of proper shelter and clean water. This is still the human bondage of modern civilization, in which the privileged segment of human society carries the obligation to free itself, and in fact, possesses the ability to do so.

“Verily, (O you believe in Me,) this community of yours is one single community, since I am the Sustainer of you all: worship, then, Me (alone)” (21.92) MA

Each and Every Nation of Mankind Had a Messenger

Allah has sent Messengers to each and every community to bring and sustain divine guidance amongst every generation, every nation, and every people. Every community has had a messenger. Allah tells us:

“To every people (was sent) a Messenger” (10.47) YA

Muhammad Asad observed that “This verse stresses (a) the continuity of religious revelations in mankind's history and the fact that in the long run no community, period, or civilization has been left without prophetic guidance.”¹⁹ This stresses the Oneness of God and the need to submit fully to His will.

18. Muhammad Asad, see note 48 related with Ayah 4.36 on pg 128

19. Muhammad Asad, note 68 related with Ayah 10.47 on pg 336

In His infinite wisdom Allah recognized that the message each messenger brought should be communicated in relation to the cultural, historical, and linguistic circumstances of the people to whom the message was revealed.

“We sent not a messenger except (to teach) in the language of his (own) people, in order to make (things) clear to them” (14.4) YA

Muhammad Asad explains “Since every divine writ was meant to be understood by man, it is obvious that each had to be formulated in the language of the people whom the particular prophet was addressing in the first instance; and the *Qur'an*- not withstanding its universal import-is no exception in this respect.”²⁰ Similarly Yusuf Ali concludes, “If the object of a Message is to make things clear, it must be delivered in the language current among the people to whom the Messenger is sent. Through them it can reach all mankind.”²¹

“There is even a wider meaning for language.” Yusuf Ali explained further, “It is not merely a question of alphabets, letters or words. Each age, people, -or world in a psychological sense, casts its thoughts in a certain mould or form. Allah’s message –being universal –can be expressed in all moulds and forms, and is equally valid and necessary for all grades of humanity, and must therefore be explained to each according to his or her capacity or receptivity. In this respect the *Qur'an* is marvelous. It is for the simplest as well as the most advanced.”

Universal application of this message also affirms that divine messages that emphasized Tawhid have been conveyed to all the Prophets in their own languages. God is listening to human beings, whether they communicate in Azeri, Bangla, Farsi, Malay or Telugu. And when Allah is answering to an ibaad who is fervently offering *salah*, meaning prayer, to Him, the answer is transmitted in the same language, so that the ibaad may understand.

Allah has instructed us not to differentiate among the Prophets He has sent to mankind. Each Prophet has been instructed to convey to mankind only His guidance.

“Say : “We believe in God and what has been sent down to us, and what had been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their progeny, and that which was given to Moses and Christ, and to all other prophets by the Lord. We make no distinction among them, and we submit to Him.” (2.136) AA

Common Message of all Messengers

The fundamental message Allah has sent to mankind from time immemorial is Tawhid, meaning ‘Worship none but Allah.’ All prophets have guided humanity to the single command that ‘there is no god, but Allah.’

20. Muhammad Asad, note 3 related with Ayah 14.4 on pg 414

21. Yusuf Ali, note 1874 related with Ayah 14.4 on pg 604

“We never sent a messenger before thee save that We revealed to him, saying, ‘There is no god but I, so worship me” (21.25) AA

Diversity in human civilization is bonded by a single unifying message that there is no god but Allah. We learn from Al-Qur’an that all Prophets of the humanity have come from Allah to relate a single universal truth: that there is no god but Allah. The later prophets came only to confirm the messages of the earlier prophets, explained Al-Qur’an to us.

“It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus).” (3.3) YA

Allah affirms repeatedly that the fundamental requirement of an ibaad, meaning a believer in One God, is resting absolute faith on Allah only with an earnest desire to receive His blessings.

“Surely the believers and the Jews, Nazareans and the Sabians, whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and whosoever does right, shall have reward with his Lord and will neither have fear nor regret.” (2.62) AA

“All those who believe, and the Jews and the Sabians and the Christians, in fact any one who believes in God and the Last Day, and performs good deeds, will have nothing to fear or regret.” (5.69) AA

Summing up, Tawhid is the message of all Prophets of the humanity throughout the history of human kind. By affirming La ilaha illal Lah, again and again, we testify repeatedly to that ultimate truth that there is no god but Allah.

Many Ways of Remembering Allah

The principle way of remembering Allah is based on the tool of the power of human expression. The very first revelation of Al-Qur’an to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was a direct instruction that we read and proclaim in the name of our Lord.

*“Read in the name of your Lord who created,
Created man from an embryo;
Read, for your Lord is most beneficent,
Who taught by the pen,
Taught man what he did not know.”*

(96.1-5) AA

Muhammad Asad observed that this ayah “alludes to man’s embryonic evolution out of a ‘germ-cell’- i.e. out of a fertile female ovum- thus contrasting the primitiveness

and simplicity of his biological origins with his intellectual and spiritual potential: a contrast which clearly points to the existence of a conscious design and a purpose underlying the creation of life.”²²

The word *Qalam*, meaning a pen, is used here as a symbol for the art of writing or, more specifically, for all knowledge recorded by means of writing. Muhammad Asad observes: “This explains the symbolic summons ‘Read’ at the beginning of verses 1 and 3. Man’s unique ability to transmit, by means of written records, his thoughts, experiences and insights from individual to individual, from generation to generation, and from one cultural environment to another endows all human knowledge with a cumulative character; and since, thanks to this God-given ability, every human being partakes, in one way or another, in mankind’s continuous accumulation of knowledge, man is spoken of as being ‘taught by God’ things which a single individual does not - and, indeed, cannot - know himself.”²³

Continued Muhammad Asad “This double stress on man’s utter dependence on God, who creates him as a biological entity and implants in him the will and the ability to acquire knowledge, receives its final accent, as it were, in the next three verses.” Asad explains in the same note “Furthermore, God’s ‘teaching’ man signifies also the act of His revealing, through the prophets, spiritual truths and moral standards which cannot be unequivocally established through human experience and reasoning alone: and, thus, it circumscribes the phenomenon of divine revelations as such.”

The power of man’s expression is the greatest gift of God. The scientific process for articulating our thoughts is comprised of three sequential, but integrated, biological phases. First, our faculty of intelligence enables us to float in our mind the seed of a certain thought. Second, our mind analyses the thought and deciphers that thought as distinct from other thoughts crowding the mind. Third, our mind brings into force our power of expression, articulating by tongue that thought in clear, audible speech.

Along with this thought process, comes our physical ability to articulate the thought in writing and in hand signs, concurrently. We should cultivate our thought processes to comprehend the beauty from each creation in our universe and the universes beyond our reach as yet.

First: By Comprehending Allah’s Magnificence

Allah is the Creator. He is the only God. Everything in this universe is His creation. He is *Neerakar*, as we may affirm in Bangla language, meaning He has no shape or form. None has been created is in His image. None of His creation can claim a visible image of Him. He is neither male nor female. He is the First and the Last. He is

22. Muhammad Asad, also review note 1 related with Ayah 96.1 on pg 1099

23. Muhammad Asad, note 3 related with Ayah 96.3-6 on pg.1099

Eternal. Death does not touch Him. He Himself has created death. He has established a new plane of life for us following our physical death. He sees, hears, and records everything we did for us. Even the meanings of our body language are transparent to Him. He is always with us. He, in fact, is nearer to our jugular veins. He will preserve our soul, upon our death on this earth. He will judge each of us with fairness and justice on the day of our resurrection, and upon judgment will confer our just rewards for our eternal abode.

We cannot conceptualize a real image of Him. But we could enhance our intellect to seek a higher knowledge of Him. Our knowledge of Him, captured by our human intellect, with the tools of the mind and brain received from Him, are the means by which Allah wishes to make Himself known to us.

He has endowed us with five senses. The perimeter of each sense is limited. We understand within the perimeter of what we have experienced by means of our biological organs. We see with our eyes. We touch with our hands. We taste with our tongue. We visualize with our mind. We order our spoken language with our intellect. We articulate our thoughts with our mind. We command our fingers to craft our writing conveying our thoughts and our intellectuality.

Each of our understanding differs, although we are subjected to the same experience, even when we deploy the entire faculty of our intellect. What, in fact, is the color of a dawn will vary from the perception of an artist to the perception of an engineer, even when both of them see the dawn from the same spot and under the same shade of light. But a person who has not been endowed with eyesight since birth, who has had no experience of seeing and visualizing the rainbow color of the dawn, he conceptualizes the color and brightness of a rising sun solely by his own cultured intellect. He receives his own meaning and visualizes his own image of the dawn. Similarly when we contemplate the beauty of Allah within the perimeter of our own knowledge, we shall have our own shades of meanings related to what we have experienced.

We find Allah's beauty in everything He has created. The universe He has created reflects His beauty. Al-Qur'an that He bestowed on us captures in His own words His beauty. The Asma'ul Hus'na sums up for the human mind the essential messages of Al-Qur'an so we may understand the Author. The human intellect enables us to reflect upon the significance of His beautiful names. Without such application of intellect, mankind serves no purpose for humanity, either individually or collectively. Our human intellect enables us to reflect upon the specific significance of each His beautiful names.

Second: By Appreciating the Beauty of the Universes

Allah has endowed the cosmos to us. The cosmos was created and has been subdued to us so that we can make *ibadah*, which means subject our will to His will. The universe

is not complete without Allah's living creations. Without the universe, humanity is unable to fulfill the mission assigned by the Creator. Significance of every name of Allah is evidenced in the cosmos.

"Whatever is in the heavens and on earth_Let it declare the Praises and Glory of Allah: for He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise." (57.1, 59.1) YA

Third: By Capturing Treasures of Human Intellect

The messages preserved in Al-Qur'an addresses directly to men's intellect. The first revelation that came to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is a direct command: arise, read and write. The Prophet (pbuh), who received the command had not acquired the skill of reading and consequently had not exercised the craft of writing. Was not this fact known to All- Knowing Allah? It was known, yet He repeatedly gave through the angel the same command.

In fact, this is Allah's eternal direction to mankind: to use the intellect given by Him to humanity for constructive and productive purposes of human development. He gave a direct instruction to mankind. We should use the craft of the pen with which we have been taught by the angels. We should use profusely the ink provided to us by nature. We should engage the fingers of our hands to move the pen for writings. We should deploy with our consciousness the knowledge gained from the craft of the pen effectively. Allah's knowledge is infinite. Even if we use inks equal to the seven seas, yet even then, we cannot exhaust His fathomless knowledge. We should search for that knowledge for the good of the humanity till infinity.

The glorification of Allah by each living entity is pegged to the specific intellect of that living subject. We may subsume that such glorification is linked to the depth of knowledge of Allah, which Allah Himself, has infused to that created subject. Flowers may glorify Allah as the Lord of sun, earth and water. Bees may glorify Allah as the Lord of flowers on which it is dependent for honey, as well as, Lord of earth, sun and water. Other living creatures in nature may glorify Allah as the Lord of earth, sun and moon. All the elements glorify Allah in the ways He taught them.

We, as intelligent men and women, are similarly expected to recognize Allah in every aspect of our life. When we look at nature, we see the blessings of Allah behind it. When we search within our minds for the reasons of our existence on this earth, we bow down in humility to Him. We glorify Allah as our *Rabb*, our Lord, as well as the Lord of bees, flowers, earth, sun and water. It is Allah, Who is the provider, sustainer, life giver, and merciful.

Many aspects of our physical life either attract us or repulse us. We feel drawn by the power of joy and happiness, as well as feeling sad and withdrawn by the power of destruction caused by the instruments of human intellect. Lightening threatens

some of us, while its awe inspires others. Each human mind interprets the beauty and grandeur of nature in its own way. And, therefore, each interpretation will vary. But what does not vary is the humility of man before Allah! We realize within our own hearts, when we have truly submitted to God.

“Our God and your God is one, and to Him we submit.” (29.46) AA

Fourth: By Reflecting on the Beautiful Names

Whatever Allah conveyed in Al-Qur’an is an expression from Him. Every ayah, every verse, every word, every letter, expresses Allah. Allah is communicating through Al-Qur’an directly to mankind. Some of the beautiful attributes, which Allah wished us to know, had been revealed in Al-Qur’an. Traditions convey to us that there are many more beautiful attributes which have not been revealed to us.

Al-Qur’an does not mention any specific number of attributes. Beyond our numeration are the beautiful attributes of Allah. Islamic scholars, however, denote that traditions have bestowed upon us ninety-nine names for our Thikr, meaning for our daily callings and remembrance. Among the many scholars, I have consulted six authors, as noted below, profusely²⁴. They all have accepted that among the companions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), two of his companions,²⁵ Abu Hurairah and At-Tirmidhi, (pbut) tell us that the number of beautiful attributes for Thikr is ‘ninety nine’. Their hadith had been confirmed by two other reliable sources of traditions: the Muslim scholars of the seventh century Al-Bukhari and Al-Muslim (pbut). Al-Bukhari related that one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) Abu Hurairah, narrated that “The Prophet of Allah (pbuh) said ‘Allah has ninety-nine names, i.e. one –hundred minus one, and whoever believes in their meanings and acts accordingly, will enter Paradise; and Allah is *Witr* (One) and loves ‘the *Witr*’”. Al-Muslim²⁶ also conveyed the same tradition. “We are told by the Prophet, peace be upon him, that ‘Allah has ninety-nine names, a hundred minus one. Any one who learns them goes to paradise.’”

The author Sidheeque Veliankode noted that “The Hadith related by At-Tirmizi, accepted by some as authentic, mentions 99 names of Allah.”²⁷ He affirmed further “I have used these ninety-nine names according to At Tirmizi in this book.” To sum up, traditions convey to us that Allah has revealed ninety-nine attributes to encourage us to remember Him with those attributes. At-Tirmidhi has listed them. And most of the Muslim scholars of modern times accept this list as authentic.

During the time of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), one of his companions was

24. Samira Fayyad Khawaldeh, Rashad Shaban Ramadan, Shaikh Abu Abdu-r-Rahman Nasir As Sadi, Ahmed H Sakr, Muhammad Iqbal Siddiqi, Sidheeque M.A Veliankode (see Bibliography)

25. Related by Al-Bukhari, Kitab-Ad-Dawat, as quoted by Veliankode pg 2

26. Mentioned by Bukhari, Muslim, as cited by Samia pg.16

27. Veliankode pg 2

calling upon Allah, while praying, with the words “Oh All Merciful One! Oh All Compassionate One!” One of the pagans heard the repeated call to Allah by the ‘ibadah with different attributes. He asked, “Did not Muhammad believe in One God only? Is he not asking his followers to believe in One God only? If so, why then this follower is calling upon multiple Gods?” The ayah quoted below (17.110) was then revealed to explain the distinction between the proper name and the attributes belonging to the proper name of One God, Allah.

“Say: ‘Call Him Allah or call Him Ar-Rahman; whatever the name you call Him by, all His names are beautiful.’” (17.110) AA

The proper name of One God given in Al-Qur’an is Allah. The other names termed as Al Asma’ul Hus’na are not proper names, but attributes expressing His quality and power. Muhammad Asad in the context of ayah 7:180 observed “As regards the expression, *al-asma’-al-husna*, ‘lit. the most perfect (or most goodly) names’, which occurs in the Qur’an four times _ i.e. in the above verse (7:180) as well as in 17:110, 20:8, and 59:24_ it is to be borne in mind that the term *ism* is, primarily, a word applied to denote the substance or the intrinsic attributes of an object under consideration, while the term *al-husna* is the plural form of *al-ahsan* (‘that which is best or most goodly’). Thus, the combination of *al-asma’ al-husna* may be appropriately rendered as ‘the attributes of perfection’, - a term reserved in the *Qur’an* for God Alone”²⁸.

Muhammad Asad in the context of ayah 6:99 reaffirms that “God, however, is unique, there being ‘nothing like unto Him (42:11), and, therefore, ‘nothing that could be compared with Him (112:4)_ with the result that the any attempt at defining Him, or His ‘attributes’ is a logical impossibility and, from the ethical point of view, a sin. The fact that He is undefinable makes it clear that the ‘attributes’ (*sifat*) of God mentioned in the Qur’an do not circumscribe His reality but, rather, the perceptible *effect of His activity* on and within the universe created by Him.”

There is an inner distinction between the Arabic words *asmaa*, usually translated as name and the Arabic word *siffat*, usually understood as an attribute. For example: Ar-Rahman is a name. Rahmah is an attribute. The attribute denotes the name that is derived from. The attributes enable us to contemplate by the tools of our limited intellectual faculty, the magnificence of the universe He has created, the beauty of the nature He has crafted, and the vast blessings with which He has endowed mankind. Reciting His names during our five prayers brings us closer to Him. Remembering Him silently and repeatedly in our hearts while at work or at daily business during the day and night brings us closer to Him.

We may invoke Allah’s blessing proactively for specific purposes. For example, if we are aspiring to enhance our own knowledge we may say within our minds:

28. Muhammad Asad : See note 145 for ayah 7:180 at page 263 in conjunction with note 88 on Ayah 6:99 at page 214

“*Rabbi Jidni Ilmii*” meaning “Oh our Lord, increase me in knowledge”. When our child is away from home, we may pray: “*Ya Hafeez*, Please keep our child under Your protection.” This was the prayer of the father of Prophet Yusuf (pbuh) when his elder brothers plotted and took him away from their aging father. Allah listened to the prayer of the appealing father, and protected his young son Prophet Yusuf (pbuh) from all the calamities of life.

We light our faith by remembering a specific attribute, by reflecting in our mind the various significances of that attribute, and by associating ourselves with activities, which are consistent with that attribute. We enhance, within our trembling hearts, our dependence upon Allah. Our calling upon Allah brings each and every attribute of One God to us. When we call upon Allah, we implicitly invoke all ninety-nine listed attributes, and all other revealed attributes mentioned in Al-Qur’an and all the infinite number of unrevealed attributes. Remembering Allah is counted as a Prayer.

Have all ninety-nine attributes listed by At-Tirmidhi been mentioned explicitly in Al-Qur’an? I have consulted the works of six recognized Islamic authors who have written scholarly on Al Asma’ul Hus’na. The authors are Khawaldeh, Ramadan, Nasir As-Sa’di, Sakr, Siddiqi, and Veliankode. Except Veliankode, none of the remaining five scholars I have consulted allude clearly to above question. Veliankode has identified 73 attributes from the list of At-Tirmidhi that according to him had actually been mentioned in Al-Qur’an²⁹. He has also indicated how many times each attribute is quoted in Al-Qur’an. Of the remaining 26 attributes, Veliankode observes that while Al-Qur’an mentions the relevant themes, the Hadith narrated the attribute itself. On the other end, Sakr has cited relevant ayah from Al-Qur’an for each of the ninety-nine attributes listed by At Tirmidhi. At the other end of the spectrum, Sa’di has outlined a distinct and separate set of ninety nine attributes all drawn from Al-Qur’an.

Moreover, four of the six scholars have cited in their research additional attributes which had also been mentioned in Al-Qur’an but were not included among the set of ninety-nine names listed by At-Tirmidhi. Veliankode mentions 21 additional attributes while Sa’di has mentioned 22 attributes, and Siddiqi, 24 attributes. Ahmed Sakr identified only 3 additional names.

The ninety-nine attributes could be grouped in three major clusters. The first cluster, comprising about one third of the attributes, expounds Allah’s Glory, such as *Al-Malik*, *Maliku’l Mulk*. They indicate His overwhelming power and majesty. The second cluster, comprising about one-third of the attributes, denotes Allah’s Benevolence and His overriding love for His created subjects, such as *Ar- Rahman*, *Ar- Rahim*, *Al- Wahhab*. The third cluster, comprising the remaining one-third of the attributes, depicts Allah’s Creation. Those attributes also denote His true justice for those He created. Each of the attributes covers many hues of meaning, all supporting and

29. For each attribute Veliankode has noted the number of times the name has been articulated in Al-Qur’an. see chapter 06.

elaborating on that basic quality.

Al-Qur'an denotes many of the attributes as synonyms as well as antonyms. The attributes are mentioned as single (*Al-Jabbar*) or in conjunctions (such as *Azizul-Hakeem*, *Azizul-Jalil*, *Samiul-Aleem*). All the asmaa lead us to the concept of Tawhid. When we say Al-Malik, the attribute means that Allah is a reality, possessing the attributes of sovereignty, to such a degree that nothing else shall really reflect that attribute and does not deserve it. When Allah is the Sovereign, the principle of Tawhid implies that "There is no sovereign, but the Sovereign". He is the Owner of the Kingdom. All the power and authority the men enjoys on earth as presidents, kings, prime ministers, comes from the Sovereign.

Each *ism*, broadly meaning asmaa, when remembered enthuse the soul of the person who is remembering the *ism* with all the attributes of that *ism*. When we call upon *Ya Rahman*, we receive mercy from The Merciful repeatedly. We are granted as well qualities of giving mercy to our fellow creatures and such trait are imbued within our hearts.

The most frequently mentioned attribute in Al-Qur'an is Knowledge, followed by the attributes of Mercy, Forgiveness, Equity and Justice. The attributes which have been mentioned only once are related with His Reality, such as *Al-Haqq*, a truth that can not be denied or His Power, such as *Al-Jabbar*, to negate the disobedience of the servants with just measures.

Fifth: By Seeking and Gaining Knowledge

What distinguishes man from other created living subjects? It is his intellect flowing out of the continuing interaction of his mind, brain, and soul. Biological sciences are still searching for what constitutes a mind, a brain and a soul. Mind is dependent upon a brain. The activities of a brain are dependent upon a mind. But the reality of a soul is still beyond the comprehension of the human mind.

We also know that the knowledge of this world has been transmitted gradually to us. As we strive to gain more knowledge we find that Allah is opening up new frontiers of our knowledge, every day. With intellect given by Allah we strive ourselves, with our science, with our logical thinking, and with our technology. Today, we know more about Allah's book of nature, through the continual cultivation of our intellect for sciences, biology and physics, compared to what we knew 5000 years ago, or 2000 years ago or even 500 years ago or 100 years ago or 20 years ago.

The explosion of human knowledge through internet technology runs across a small global village. The concept of worldwide web pages (www) was beyond our comprehension, even in the 1980s. The dramatic growth of knowledge during this millennium, in each and every field of science humbles our imagination. Mobile phones transmit information across the continents, transforming the world into one

global economic and financial market. With further technological advancement, deeper and higher types of knowledge shall dawn upon us, only by the will of Allah, at a time determined by Allah.

Allah completed the design of the complex inter-related infrastructure for effective functioning of the universe fully during the very creation of the universe, which is now estimated as having taken place a billion years ago. Any novice architect will not fail to notice this fundamental fact. He also implanted all the required transmitting structure for information technology at the same time.

The very foundations and pillars of the current flow of worldwide knowledge exchange, - the infrastructure of the world wide web pages-, which we have begun to use only recently, was not built in the universe, just the day before of the wavelength era of 1990s. But, we acquired that knowledge, only when Allah determined that we were ready to gain benefit for mankind from that tool.

The same truth remains for forthcoming knowledge on cosmic rays, light, magnetic forces, and interdependences between energy and matter. When Allah wishes, the genetic sciences shall discover the beautiful craft of the human body and its inner beauty through the workings of the mind, brain and communication links.

Time is a creation of Allah. Will science enable us to travel through the time back to the ancient past when such scientific knowledge is duly sought from Allah and gained from Him? Present supersonic technology already allows us to travel bodily ahead of time. The ascent of our Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to the heaven to meet Allah, presented in the truth of miraaaj, meaning the ascent, is still a miracle to us.

The concept of the fourth dimension still challenges the physical science and space technology and strives to seek out our bestowed fountain of knowledge from Allah. Will forthcoming knowledge of the current millennium enable humanity to proceed within the parameters of a fourth dimension? Only Allah knows.

Similarly, electrons are a creation of Allah. Ask any physicist. Ask any scientist, whether chemical or biological! None would deny the role electrons play in the manifestations of knowledge development in the field of molecular sciences, space sciences and biological sciences. But electrons are invisible. No modern gadget is able to capture an image of electrons. Does this mean that electrons do not exist? Shall we catch a glimpse of electrons in the coming time? Only Allah knows.

Will we, ever be able to fully comprehend the significance of all the beautiful attributes He has conveyed to us? We cannot comprehend Him with our limited intelligence faculty, as yet. However, when the full spectrum of knowledge dawns, over the finite period of the universe to us, perhaps then, by His will, we shall fully realize our beloved Allah.

And Finally: By Our Total Submissions

“Your God is One God”, Allah said many times in Al-Qur’an. He asked us to call Him. He said He is near to us. He assured us that He would respond to each of our calls. He said He is nearby, eagerly waiting for our call. He assured us that if we take one step forward, He will advance to us in two quick steps, as a loving mother does to protect and guide her toddler. He asked us not to sink and remain in despair! His mercy spreads to all his subjects, because He has made extension of such mercy His responsibility. He has assured us that His mercy precedes his wrath.

Allah is the Lord of the Universe. He is the One God and none is equal to Him. He has created all of us. And He has created the universe to be of benefit to us. He is the God of humanity. He is the God of Adam. He is the God of Prophet Ibrahim, of Prophet Noah, of Prophet Ismail, of Prophet Ishaaq, and the thousands of other Prophets who have brought His message to humanity from time immemorial. Each and every nation and tribes belonging to this humanity has received His messengers so that they could bring their community the voice of one God. He has designated Messengers from the community itself, speaking the language of the community, so that the message the messenger conveyed would be understood by that community.

He could have made mankind into one community. Yet, He has distributed us over many races and cultures to bring forth diversity and enrichment. He has created thousands of languages, so that we may speak freely and openly. He asked us to speak and communicate with Him in any language of our choice. He understands all languages. He has assured us that He reads our hearts. And He grasps the sincerity of our mind.

Allah is Kind and Merciful. He is calling us to come closer to Him. He is drawing us near to Him, so that we may cling to Him, as we did within the embrace of our mother when we were children. Whatever our biological age, we are still His children. He asked us to call Him. Call Him by all the beautiful names. All the beautiful names belong to the Him. We respond to His call. We submit to our Creator. Our relative success in depicting His beautiful names comes only from Him. We lean on Him. We count on Him. We beg forgiveness from Him, for our willing and unwilling mistakes and failures.

And we testify that all beautiful names belong to one and only Allah. Whatever name in which we shall realize Him, we may choose to call upon Him, with that name. He is One God: The All-Knowing, The Most Merciful, The Almighty, The Wise, The All Forgiving, The Dispenser of Grace, The All Hearing, The All Aware, The All Seeing, The All Witness, The One, The Self Sufficient, The Praiseworthy, The Trustee, The Guardian, The Most Forbearing, The Ultimate Truth, The Acceptor of Repentances, The Compassionate, The Highly Exalted One, The Glorious, The Exalted, The All Embracing, The Perfectly Strong, The Creator, The Unfathomable,



The Tremendous, The All Powerful, The Guide, The Dominating One, The Sovereign Supreme, The Ever Living, The Pardoner, The Appreciative One, The Bestower, The Absolute Reckoner, The Protector, The Most Generous, The Watchful, The Eternal, The Maker, The Holy, The Loving-Kind, The Glorious, The Creator of Life, The Lord of Majesty and Generosity, The Wonderful Originator, The Source of Peace, The Giver of Faith, The Ever Watching, The Compeller, The Supreme, The Fashioner, The Provider, The Opener, The Exalter, The Impartial Judge, The Maintainer, The Responsive Answerer, The Firm One, The Only One, The Abiding, The First, The Last, The Evident, The Hidden One, The Beneficent One, The Lord of The Dominion, The Gatherer of Mankind, The Light, The Expander, The Abaser, The Honourer, The One Who Disgraces, The Just One, The Majestic, The Truly Forgiving, The Reckoner, The Originator of Creation, The Restorer, The Bringer of Death, The Finder, The Glorified One, The Foremost, The Deferrer, The Avenger, The Upholder of Equity, The Enricher, The Preventer, The One Who Withholds, The Bringer of Distress, The Benefit Conferrer, The Inheritor, The Judicious Guide, The Firmly Patient, The Able, The Self Subsisting, and The Awakener.

He has many splendid Names. And whatever faith we may belong to, whenever we search our own soul, wherever we dip within our own mind, we find each of His Names resonate in equal intensity and radiate in our souls with equal glory.

We realize reciting Thy Names brings solace to each of us. Ameen.

رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَمْنَا
فَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا
وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

*Rabbana innana amanna faghfir-lana dhunubana
wa-qina adhaban-nar
(Al-Imran 3.16)*

Our Lord, surely we believe ! So forgive us our sins
and save us from the punishment of the Hellfire !
(Al-Imran 3.16)

رَبِّ إِنِّي
لَمَّا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ
مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ

*Rabbi inni lima anzalta ilayya min khayrin faqir
(Al-Qasas 28.24)*

O my Lord ! I am in need of any good which You may
send to me
(Al-Qasas 28.24)

Thy Beautiful Attributes 05

As we now open the main content segment of ‘Thy Names’ we shall notice that the left page is illustrated with artistic calligraphy of the visual image of one of the ninety-nine attributes. The right page elaborates that attribute with excerpts, writings and quotations. The center of right page inscribes the attribute in Arabic, followed by main meaning of the name in English in bold, and other related meanings. The top right corner of the right page contains a short quote of ayah in Arabic for each attribute. The left top corner presents its transliteration and meanings. This is expected to be memorized, as a succinct tool for remembering Allah on all occasions. The main body of the right page excerpts the relevant ayat from Al-Qur’an and its selected translation in English, enabling us to reflect and ponder on the attributes. The bottom page outlines our humble Munajat directly to Allah.

Now we undertake our journey to understand the significance and beauty of each of the ninety nine attributes. The path for this journey is simple and logical. The designed layout for illustrating the ninety nine attributes of Allah is meant to relate to the intellectual needs of an inquisitive mind.



YA-ALLAH

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا

Innanil ‘Anal-lahu Laa Ilaha Illaa (20.14)
Verily, I – I alone am God; there is no deity save Me
(MA)

Surah Yunus (Jonah) 10.4: “To Him will be your return_of all of you. The promise of Allah is true and sure. It is He who beginneth the process of Creation, and repeateth it, that He may reward with justice those who believe and work righteousness; but those who reject Him will have draughts of boiling fluids, and a penalty grievous, because they did reject Him.” (YA)

Surah Ta Ha (O Man) 20.14: “Verily, I am Allah: There is no god but I: So serve thou Me (only), and establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise.” (YA)

Surah Al-Qasas (The Story) 28.70: “And He is Allah: there is no god but He. To Him be praise, at the first and at the last: for Him is the Command, and to Him shall ye (all) be brought back.” (YA)

Our Munajat:

Oh Allah! Our Rab! You have informed us, ‘Verily, I am Allah’. You have assured us that, ‘the promise of Allah is the truth’. You have advised us, ‘And He is the Allah’. You have reminded us that, ‘And all affairs go back to Allah.’

Oh Allah! None of Your created subjects can assume Your name or Your authority or Your power. You alone are Alone! Al-Qur’an is Your book of guidance for us, revealed to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). In about 2697 ayat of Al-Qur’an You have named Yourself for us as Allah.

While defining Yourself in Al-Qur’an, You are indeed explicit and emphatic,

direct and unambiguous, clear and succinct: You are our eternal reality. One day, upon Your command, our entire universe will change, collapse and pass away. But You shall endure forever. Your power transcends the eternity, unimpeded by time, place or circumstances. Your love bestows the waves of mercy till the eternity.

Oh Allah! We owe our very existence to You. You stay very close with us. You never leave us alone.

01. Ar-Rahman

The Most Merciful

تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Tanzilum-minar-Rahmanir-Rahim (41.2)

A revelation from (Allah), Most Gracious, Most Merciful (41.2) YA

Surah Al-Fatihah (The Opening) 1.1-7: “In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Praise be to Allah the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds; Most Gracious, Most Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgement. Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek. Show us the straight way, the way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray.” (YA)

Surah Al-Israa (The Night Journey) 17.110: “Say ‘Call Him Allah or call Him Ar-Rahman; whatever the name you call Him by, all His names are beautiful’. Do not say your prayers too loudly or in too low a voice, but follow a middle course.” (AA)

Our Munajat:

Oh Rahmanur Raheem. You are the source of all mercy. And You grant us mercy with the dictates of Your wisdom. Your bestowal flows through two distinct conduits. The first conduit of mercy benefits each and every created subject, irrespective of creed, color or belief. The second conduit of mercy springs as and when an ibaad strives actively for receiving mercy. You have denoted the first quality by the asmaa, Ar-Rahman, while You have denoted the second quality by the asmaa, Ar-Rahim.

Your mercy descends on us on the very moment of our creation. Your mercy springs to us when we are still in the *rahem*, the womb of our mother, and remains with us, through her, until she returns to You. Our living life expresses the divine nature of Your *rahma*, mercy as symbolized by our ability to hear, speak, see, and digest food, for sustaining our physical body. None of those faculties

are of our creation. You have granted this *rahma* to all of Your living creations, irrespective of race, creed or color; irrespective of faith; and irrespective of class of life, whether plant life, or animal life, or human life. Your abundant *rahma* is always present and will always be available with us. Your mercy will never be depleted.

Even when we become rebellious, seek the companion of the *satan* and incur wrath, we shall still realize deep within our hearts that there is none but You, who can save us from the wrath. And we shall seek Your guidance to return to Your path.

Ya Rahmanur Rahim! Your Mercy shall never leave us alone. Please guide us to learn how we could become meaningful for others life and extend our own compassion to their life.



02. Ar-Rahim

The Dispenser of Grace

The Ever Merciful

وَالْهَكْمُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

*Wa Ilahukum Ilahunw -Wahidun- Laa ilaha
illa Huwar -Rahmaa-nur-Rahim*

*(2.163) And Your God is the One God: There is no
deity save Him, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of
Grace (2.163) MA*

Surah Al-Araf (The Faculty of Discernment) 7.156: “‘Enjoin for us good in the world, and good in the world to come, we turn to you alone.’ And the Lord said: ‘I punish only those whom I will, but My mercy enfolds everything. I shall enjoin it for those who take heed for themselves, who pay the zakat and believe in My signs’.” (AA)

Surah Az-Zumar (The Throngs) 39.53: “Say: ‘Oh my servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful’.” (YA)

Our Munajat:

Ya Rahmanur Rahim. Oh the Merciful!
Oh the Beneficent! Your abundant rahma
is always present and will always be
available for us.

The air mixing oxygen and carbon dioxide
in correct proportions within the nature
makes the pure water. The river flows to
all lands. The rain brings abundances to
all living things, allowing production of
food, enriching of health and enabling of
earnings.

Ya Raheem! You dispense blessings, as
and when, we have prepared ourselves to
receive it. When we make our own strive
to expand and build on what you have
bestowed on us out of your *rahma*, - our
own intelligence, our own vision, and our
own mind- You grant us more and more
graces, even before our asking.

The results of our toil, - the crops produced
from the land we cultivate, earnings we
receive from our daily work-, comes
only from You.

When a sinning servant returns repenting
and prostrating with full sincerity and
humility and asks for forgiveness, You
bestow the highest form of Your *rahma*.

No matter how large is our sin and how
long we have carried our guilt secretly
within our hearts, You have assured us
that a sincere repentance will blot away
all of our past wrong doings, and will
spring mercy from Your fathomless well
of mercy. We must not despair, but we
must return, repent, and seek Your *rahma*.

Mercy brings mercy. We must give mercy
to those who requires mercy in order to
gain mercy from You. Mercy needs to
be dispensed in order to draw from Your
well of mercy.

Those of us who show mercy to other
fellows in this worldly life could justly
hope that in reward hereafter, You will
shower Your mercy with just on those of
us.

03. Al-Malik

The Sovereign Supreme

The True Ruler

مَلِكِ النَّاسِ ُ



Malikin-Nas (114.2)
The Sovereign of men (114.2) MA

Surah Al-Imran (The House of Imran) 3.26-27: “Say: ‘Lord, Sovereign of all sovereignty, You bestow sovereignty on whom You will and take it away from whom You please. You exalt whomever You will and abase whomever You please. In Your hand lies all that is good; You have power over all things. You cause the night to pass into the day, and the day into the night; You bring forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living. You give without stint to whom You will’.” (NJD)

Surah Ta Ha (O Man) 20.114: “High above all is Allah, the King, the Truth! Be not in haste with the Quran before its revelation to thee is completed, but say, ‘Oh my Lord! advance me in Knowledge’.” (YA)

Surah Al-Furqan (The Standard of True and False) 25.2: “He to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: no son has He begotten, nor has He a partner in His dominion: It is He who created all things, and ordered then in due proportions.” (YA)

Our Munajat:

Ya Malikin Nas! You have created the entire universe. You own it. And You maintain it. Each of Your creation belongs to You, is subservient to You, and is dependent upon You. You have absolute sway over all that exists! To You belongs the absolute authority for conducting our lives and for leading us to our welfare. You are our Sovereign Rab, our True Ruler. We are in continuing need of You.

When we ponder over the rationale of our own existence, we realize that we know very little about our stay in our current abode on earth. We know nothing in advance about the daily events that we shall encounter for this temporary abode of ours in this world. And we know absolutely nothing about the eternal

abode facing before us, where we shall transit shortly. The only fact we know, that each of us will taste the death, as a tool of our travel, to our eternal abode. It is the irrefutable truth.

Ya Malikin Nas! You have asked us, meanwhile, to disperse ourselves out on this earth to acquire our knowledge about your splendid creation. You have asked us to spread knowledge. What we plant today as our deeds, we will reap manifolds as our rewards on the Day of Judgment.

Ya Malik! We are dependent upon Your unbounded knowledge to teach us, to enlighten us and to illuminate us with Your Light. Let Your Mercy grace us on this earth, and the hereafter.



04. Al-Quddus

The Holy

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

Yusabbihu lillahi ma fis-samawati wa ma fil-ardil-Malikil-Quddusil-Azizil-Hakim (62.1)

All that is in the heavens and all that is on earth extol the limitless glory of God, the Sovereign Supreme, the Holy, the Almighty, and the Wise! (62.1) MA

Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2.30: “And lo! Thy Sustainer said unto the angels: ‘Behold, I am about to establish upon earth one who shall inherit it.’ They said ‘Wilt Thou place on it such as will spread corruption thereon and shed blood - whereas it is we who extol Thy limitless glory, and praise Thee, and hallow Thy name?’ (God) answered: ‘Verily, I know that which you do not know.’” (MA)

Surah Al-Hashr (The Gathering) 59.23: “Allah is He, than Whom there is no other god _The Sovereign, The Holy One, The Source of Peace (and Perfection), The Guardian of Faith. The Preserver of Safety, The Exalted in Might, The Irresistible, The Supreme: Glory to Allah! (High is He), above the partners they attribute to Him.” (YA)

Surah Al-Jumu‘a (The Assembly) 62.1: “All that is in the heavens and all that is on earth extol the limitless glory of God, the Sovereign Supreme, the Holy, the Almighty, and the Wise!” (MA)

Our Munajat:

Ya Quddus! You are the most Holy One. You are Pure. You extol infinite purity and perfection. No stain, no evil, no human weakness can blemish You. You are the source of all holiness.

At the beginning, when You revealed to the angels Your decision to create a new creature, the angels addressed You with honor by the words ‘Thy Holy One’. You conveyed to the angels Your Will to entrust the humankind with the power of free will. The evil satan revolted against this decision and fell from grace.

Ya Quddus! You gave us our ability of undertaking actions out of our own initiatives. It is an honor and a privilege, which You did not bestow to any of Your

other creations. Even not to the angels! Our initiatives could either follow the purity of Your Will or run against it. It could either be pleasing for You, or not.

Ya Quddus! Please enable us to carry out our deeds with our absolute sincerity and solely for Your sake, and make those acceptable to You.

Ya Quddus. Please make us pure, to become worthy of Your mercy and draw us to Your nearness.

05. As-Salam

The Source of Peace

The One with Whom all
Salvation Rests

قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَىٰ

Qulil-hamdu lillahi wa salamun ala ibadihil-ladhinas-tafa (27.59)

Say: 'All praise is due to God, and peace be upon those servants of His whom He Chose' (27.59) MA



Surah Al-Maa'idah (The Repast) 5.15-16: "People of the Book! Our apostle has come to reveal to you of what you have hidden of the Scriptures, and to forgive you much. A light has come to you from God and a glorious Book, with which God will guide to the paths of peace those that seek to please Him; He will lead them by His will from darkness to the light; He will guide them to a straight path." (NJD)

Surah Al-Anfal (The Voluntary Gifts) 8.61: "But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah: for He is One that heareth and knoweth (all things)." (YA)

Surah Al-Ahzab (The Confederates) 33.44: "On the Day when they meet Him, they will be welcomed with the greeting, 'Peace'; and He will have readied for them a most excellent reward." (MA)

Our Munajat:

Ya Salamu! You are the One with Whom all salvation rests. You are the source of peace and perfection for our earthly life. You shall bestow peace for our permanent abode. You transmit peace and perfection to whomever You wish.

When the angels brought the good news of granting the birth of Prophet Ishmael to our Prophet Ibrahim and his wife Hajar (May peace be upon them), the angels began by a greeting of peace from You. Similarly, we greet each other daily with the words *As-salamu 'Alaykum*, meaning 'may peace be with you', the greeting Your angels taught us to practice.

We extend our love and respect to our beloved Prophet Muhammad daily with a similar wish. We say *Sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam*, meaning 'May Allah blesses

him and grant him peace' during each of our prayers. Your Prophet taught us 'Whoever asks Allah to bless me once will be blessed by Allah ten times'. We follow daily his teachings.

Ya Allah! When You will grant us entry to jannat, the paradise on the Day of Judgment, fulfilling the ultimate goal of each of us, the Angels upon Your order will greet the blessed ones with the good wishes of peace.

Ya Salamu Your greetings of peace and perfection are addressed only to those who are nearest to You. When Your angels will come to return us to You, we pray that they will greet us with a message of peace from You.