

2267 - The Islamic answer to the leisure problem

the question

What is the Islamic answer to the leisure problem?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allaah.

The Islamic definition of spare time does not include the idea that there can be times when a person is absolutely free of any responsibility to do something useful and when he can waste time in ways that are of no benefit. He has duties which he must perform, towards Allaah, may He be glorified, and towards other people.

The Muslim has lots of ways in which he can fulfil these duties in the manner required by sharee'ah; these ways will bring him great rewards, and he is not hindered by difficult conditions or time restrictions.

Islam wants the Muslim, after fulfilling his obligatory duties, to use his spare time for beneficial and fruitful pursuits which will help him to draw closer to Allaah, from the moment he wakes until he goes to sleep. This will leave him with no free time to pose a problem whereby he feels a need to fill it with activities that will drain his energy or squander it in inappropriate ways.

This does not mean that human beings are to be kept busy in a way that will exhaust and drain them... that is not one of the aims of Islam, as Islam calls man to enjoy the good things and remember his share (of enjoyment) in this world.

Not everything with which a person may fill his time is exhausting and energy-draining. One thing we may do is to spend time in quiet worship, remembering Allaah in our hearts. Other things

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include taking a nap after Zuhr when it is hot; spending time chatting about decent topics with family or friends in the evening; visiting one another; joking in gentle and polite ways, and other forms of relaxation.

But it is important not to leave gaps where a person has nothing to do, or which may be filled with evil, corrupt or foolish things. Islam abolished the customs, festivals, celebrations and ways of life of the Jaahiliyyah, but it did not leave a vacuum which the Muslims would not know how to fill, or which they may fill with useless things without realizing it. On the contrary, Islam replaced those things with other customs, festivals, celebrations and ways of life to fill the gap. During the Jaahiliyyah, people used to gather to drink and gamble, or to worship idols, or to listen to misguided poetry which did not speak of any worthwhile human concerns. But Islam brought people together to worship Allaah by performing the prayer in congregation, to learn and recite the Qur'aan together, to listen to the teachings of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), to visit one another, etc. Previously, they had done evil and immoral acts during their festivals, but Islam abolished all that and gave them instead festivals which were noble, pure and filled with meaning and worthy aims.

During the early days of Islam, when family ties were cut with Mushrikeen who had not yet become Muslim, the gap was filled by the close ties between the believers, which took the place of kinship. The gap was truly filled, and the ties of faith became equivalent to the ties of blood for the believers. When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) established the mu'aakhah (brotherhood) between the Muhaajireen and Ansaar, it reached such a degree that the Ansaar shared everything they had with the Muhaajireen.

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning);

"... and [they - the Ansaar] have no jealousy in their hearts for that which they have been given (from the booty of Bani al-Nadeer), and give them (emigrants) preference over themselves, even

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though they were in need of that..." [al-Hashr 59:9]

It reached the extent that the people between whom the bond of Mu'aakhah (brotherhood) was established could inherit from one another, and so the believers did not feel that there was anything missing.

(Muhammad Qutub, Manhaj al-Tarbiyyah al-Islamiyyah, 1/206)

So this problem does not exist in the Islamic way of life. The one who constantly remembers Allaah and worships Him cannot find any empty time that needs to be filled. He is busy remembering Allaah and doing voluntary acts of worship after doing what is obligatory. He keeps himself busy memorizing Qur'aan and reciting it in worship of Allaah. He is busy visiting friends and loved ones, and visiting the sick among his friends and acquaintances, or spending time having innocent fun with his wife and children, or with fellow-believers.

From Qadaaya al-Lahw wa'l-Tarfeeh by Maadoon Rasheed, 63.

And Allaah is the Source of strength