

Taste!

Aaahh! Taste! What would life be without it?

From tart to tangy, sour to spicy, sweet to salty, and sweet and salty (think salted caramel!), everybody's tongues and palates are attuned to their own 'tastes' and preferences.

Why is it that some people eat tripe with relish while others prefer to pass on the platter? Why do some savour sushi while others die for donuts or crave croissants?

Believe it or not, our taste preferences are not pre-programmed into our DNA and genetics, but are actually acquired and learnt. Furthermore, this process commences before we are even born.

When the foetus is just eight weeks old, it's only the size of a raspberry, but it begins to develop taste buds. At twelve weeks, the foetus begins to swallow, and on a daily basis, it swallows between 200ml to 760ml of amniotic fluid! At this juncture, it is interesting to note that the amniotic fluid in the womb is literally flavoured by the food which the mother ingests. This is why the foetus, at approximately twenty-six and thirty-two weeks respectively, changes its facial expression and even its frequency of swallowing, based on what its mother ate (swallowing less and making a 'funny face' if the mother ate something bitter). Hence, the taste buds of the child are 'habituated' (made to become familiar with certain tastes) even before birth, and it is the mother who largely influences the tastes that will become entrenched in the child's palate.

After birth, the food that the mother eats

even flavours the milk of the child, to the extent that just one to two hours after eating a dish containing garlic, its flavour is perceivable in the milk. Thereafter, it is the foods and flavours to which the child is constantly exposed throughout his childhood that define his taste preferences throughout life.

Why is this so important to note? The reason is that in the broad sense of the term, 'taste' is not restricted to the mouth. Rather, people have 'taste' in the company they like to keep, 'taste' in the literature they like to read, 'taste' in the clothing they prefer to wear, 'taste' in the mindset they adopt and 'taste' in the beliefs they ascribe to.

Why is it that some people choose to recite the Quraan Majeed for hours, while others choose to read novels all night long? Why do some relish the moments spent in Tahajjud Salaah, while others prefer to party all night? Why do some happily attend the weekly ta'leem, while others make a trip to the mall instead?

**The answer –
IT'S ALL TO DO WITH TASTE.**

Those who have a taste for making Allah Ta'ala happy will only find enjoyment in His pleasure and will find all sins to be distasteful and unpalatable, while those whose taste buds have been trained to enjoy the flavour of sin will only find satisfaction in evil. Hence, understanding how taste is developed and influenced will assist us to ensure that we train our taste buds to find only those things palatable which are acceptable in Deen and pleasing to Allah Ta'ala.

This brings us to the next point – *training the taste buds.*

Since taste commences before birth, the mother and father will have to ensure that the baby in the womb is only exposed to the correct 'tastes', be it the company, literature or even mindset of the parents – especially the mother.

Thereafter, throughout childhood, extra care and caution will have to be exercised to ensure that the correct Islamic taste is developed in the child.

At this point, one may wonder, "What if a person has already developed a taste for sin and vice?" The answer is that it's never too late to put a new flavour on your plate! It's not impossible to rehabilitate your taste buds!

Nevertheless, there are a few important guidelines that will assist us to understand how the liking for a new flavour can be acquired.

- **Repeated Exposure:** It is commonly witnessed that the majority of children are not eager to eat most vegetables (unless it's fried chips!). However, research has proven that if a child is exposed to a vegetable by being made to taste it, between just eight to ten times, even if it be just a small amount at a time, the child thereafter finds the vegetable to be more palatable and begins to enjoy it. Hence, whether one is an adult or a child, exposure, in the form of the company of the pious, participating in Deeni programmes, conducting daily ta'leem in the home, etc., are a must to mould the taste buds. Even if one is not a

child, habituation still occurs through repeated exposure. Conversely, if there is repeated exposure to unwanted elements, one will gradually develop a taste and liking for them. Many people who are chain smokers today fell into the bad habit through company. However, even after the company habituated them to the smell of the smoke, when they took their first puff, they began to cough and choke and found the taste and sensation extremely unpleasant. **Nevertheless, the power of habituation prevailed and they persisted. In time, they not only developed a liking for cigarettes, but became chain smokers, seldom seen without a cigarette.**


• **Positive Association:** Imagine a person whose favourite dish is chicken tikka. One day, after enjoying his chicken tikka, he went for a boat ride, became nauseous and spewed out the entire meal. *What happens to such a person?* In many cases, he is 'turned off' chicken tikka thereafter, as it is associated with spewing – even though the

chicken tikka itself was not to blame and was not the cause of the spewing. **In the same manner, we must avoid creating an atmosphere of unpleasantness around 'ibaadah.** If a child is made to learn the Quraan Majeed by being beaten mercilessly, *how will he ever develop love for the Quraan Majeed?* Likewise, if the parents themselves express reluctance to perform 'ibaadah and behave as if the laws of Allah Ta'ala are a burden, how will the child learn to love Deen? **Conversely, we should try to create a positive impression in the child regarding 'ibaadah.** It is for this reason that when the small child learns to recite the Quraan Majeed, we give him a gift, or when he keeps his first fast, we make his favourite food and dessert.

• **Role Models:** People automatically gravitate towards things that their role models prefer and also develop preferences for them. **The marketing industry realised this decades ago and hence, when they want to market a new cold drink, chocolate**

or cereal, they do so via a sports star, movie star or some other so called celebrity. We need to ensure that we and our children take the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu 'anhum) and pious people as our role models. Instead of little red riding hood, snow white and other such characters, let us read to our children about Sayyiduna Bilaal (radhiyallahu 'anhu), Sayyiduna Suhaib (radhiyallahu 'anhu), Sayyiduna Mus'ab bin 'Umair (radhiyallahu 'anhu), Sayyidah 'Aaishah (radhiyallahu 'anha), Sayyidah Faatimah (radhiyallahu 'anha) and other similar personalities who are the true heroes of this Ummah and worthy of being emulated. **Once they begin to admire these role models, they will aspire to emulate them and become like them.**

May Allah Ta'ala bless us all and our progenies with the taste buds of true imaan, and safeguard us until we pass away with imaan, aameen.



The Ultimate Betrayal

She felt as if a bombshell had dropped... Her world was completely upside down... Her husband had been caught cheating on her! She thinks to herself, "How could he? After all I've done for him, he repays me with this? Is this his concept of loyalty?"

She then begins to ponder over all that she had done for him through the thirty-five years of their marriage. Bearing and raising his three children, through sickness and good health, patiently attending to their every need when they required her... Preparing three meals a day for her husband, with love and affection... Seeing to all the affairs of the home... Preparing for his guests... Seeing to his elderly parents... Always receiving him with a smile when he returned from a long, tiring day at work...

She repeats to herself, "How could he repay me like this? How could he do this to me?" At that moment, she is consumed by the fact that her husband has been *disloyal* and has *betrayed* her.

While we can certainly sympathise with the plight of the woman described above, as her husband's disgusting behaviour is certainly an extremely severe breach of trust and a major betrayal, how many of us have pondered over the following:

Allah Ta'ala created us, giving us a chance to strive for the ultimate reward – Jannah... He blessed us with imaan... He cared for us, from when we were foetuses, and continues to look after us at every moment of every day... He blesses us with so many bounties that it is impossible for us to enumerate them all... He blessed us with beauty, intelligence and understanding... He allowed us to be part of the best of all Ummahs and follow the best of all the Ambiyaa ('alaihimus salaam)...

Despite Allah Ta'ala doing EVERYTHING for us and showing us such love and compassion, how often do we betray Him and display disloyalty to Him on a daily basis by breaking his commands?

How can we repay His kindness in this 'heartless' manner? Is this not the 'ultimate betrayal'?

If a woman who served her husband loyally throughout their marriage considers her husband's cheating and infidelity as betrayal, which indeed it is, then our disregard for the laws of Allah Ta'ala, who shows us far more kindness than any woman can ever show to her husband, is **certainly the ultimate betrayal, a million times more severe than the husband's betrayal of his wife!**

Let us set aside a few moments daily to ponder over how much kindness and compassion we perpetually enjoy from Allah Ta'ala.

Every beat of our hearts is a blessing from Allah Ta'ala. Imagine what our condition would be if just this one bounty was snatched from us? **This should be sufficient for us to realize that we can NEVER express adequate appreciation to Allah Ta'ala for His innumerable and invaluable favours.**

Does it befit a believer to betray his most Compassionate and Kind Allah Ta'ala when he enjoys so many of His favours and bounties?

Insha-Allah, if we ponder over this, we will increase our love for Allah Ta'ala and will find it easier to abstain from disobeying Him.

May Allah Ta'ala bless us all with His true love, aameen.



What's in a DIAMOND

Approaching his devoted wife, he lovingly handed her a jewellery box, bound with a ribbon artistically tied. "Ooooh!" she exclaimed in delight, "You shouldn't have! Jazakallah!"

Then, with bated breath, and hands trembling with excitement and suspense, she untied the ribbon and prised open the box, expecting to see diamond-inlaid earrings... *only to see a simple lead pencil nestled in the velvet within!* At that moment, viewing the pencil, she thought to herself, "A pencil? Honestly, my husband must think I'm a *write off!*"

The reality of the matter, however, is that the lead in a pencil is no different to a diamond. A diamond is essentially carbon, and the lead in a pencil is made from graphite which is also a form of carbon. In other words, on a basic level, pencil lead and diamonds are the same thing. In that case, why was the wife so upset when she received a pencil instead of a diamond? Furthermore, why are pencils so cheap and diamonds so valuable and prized when both are essentially the same substance?

To unearth the answer to this question, we will have to delve deep underground – approximately 100km-250km beneath the surface to be precise, for it is here that diamonds were formed. At this depth, the carbon that transformed into a diamond remained subjected to a tremendous amount of pressure. *Imagine carrying the weight of 250km worth of combined soil and rock on your back!*

Additionally, the carbon remained exposed to the extreme heat near the earth's core – heat to the equivalent of

1050 degrees Celsius!

It is this combination of heat and pressure that causes carbon to rearrange its molecular structure and transform into diamond.

Finally, after the diamond has formed, it is volcanic eruptions that push the diamond upwards and cause it to rise towards the surface.

When a diamond is initially discovered or mined, it is still in its natural form and is regarded as 'rough'. Its true beauty remains concealed and it cannot be appreciated for the gem that it truly is. For the diamond to reach perfection, it will require three things; cutting, polishing and setting.

First, the lapidary (gem cutter) will subject the diamond to a thorough analysis, determining its weaknesses and strengths, perfections and flaws. He will then cut it in the manner most appropriate so that it will have the best shape and it can be best appreciated.

Thereafter, the diamond will be polished until it glitters and gleams. However, being the hardest naturally occurring substance, it can only be polished using other diamonds.

Finally, the diamond will be entrusted to a master jeweller who will first hold it beneath his loupe (jeweller's magnifying glass) and evaluate it. *In rating the diamond, he will consider four qualities known as the four C's; carats (weight), clarity, colour and cut.* Finally, he will mount it into a piece of jewellery, crafting an intricate and ornate work of art to be

admired by all.

It is this entire process that causes humble carbon to transform from a substance merely pencil-worthy to gold pendant-worthy, and gives it the qualities due to which people are prepared to pay a fortune for it..

In exactly the same manner, each and every one of us is like carbon – we have the potential to transform into an invaluable diamond. However, to become true diamonds, we will have to undergo the process of the diamond. *We will have to withstand and tolerate the heat of our carnal desires and the pressure of Shaitaan, society and all the other external forces that invite towards sin.*

At times, it may seem as if the pressure and heat are too much to bear, and we may certainly be tempted to throw in the towel (give up), but we have to persevere and remain committed to the cause. Without withstanding the heat and pressure, the molecular structure of our own desires and ways will never rearrange to fit the diamond structure of true Islamic values.

Thereafter, for us to progress from being 'rough' diamonds to reaching our full potential, we will require:

Cutting – we will have to subject ourselves to a thorough examination beneath the microscope of introspection. *After determining where we are falling short, we will make an effort to change our ways, habits, actions and even mindset, until they are completely moulded and shaped by Islam and the sunnah.*

Polishing – as a diamond can only be

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polished by another diamond, we will have to turn to the true diamonds of the Ummah – the rightly guided ‘Ulama – and follow their guidance. Through their guidance and teachings, we will gain the true lustre and radiance of Deen and the sunnah that will make us shine like diamonds.

Setting – as attractive as a diamond may be, if it is placed in the wrong setting, it will be spoilt and ruined. In this regard, Allah Ta’ala has taught us that the best ‘setting’ for a woman is the confines of her home. This is where her beauty as a diamond can shine and be appreciated and admired by her husband. Hence, when she emerges from her home for some necessity, Islam commands her to conceal her shine by adopting the niqaab and veiling her beauty.

Just as the value of a diamond is judged by four C’s, our value will be judged by four S’s:

1. Sincerity and whether we are striving for Him alone or for other motives.
2. Suppressing our impermissible inclinations and desires when they burn most strongly within us or we are pressured towards sin by outside influences.
3. Adherence to each and every Sunnah, whether related to the internal (e.g. not harbouring malice) or external (e.g. dressing).
4. Steadfastness on the above three and on all injunctions of Deen.

Remember, a diamond does not form overnight. Similarly, we will have to remain firm and dedicated, and in time, Allah Ta’ala will bless us with His acceptance and transform us into diamonds.

Also remember, it is through volcanic eruptions that diamonds rise and reach the top. Likewise, the extremely difficult tests and trials of life that we sometimes suffer are the ‘volcanic eruptions’ that will make us rise and reach the top. However, these tests will only serve as stairways to success if we pass them through remaining patient and steadfast.

Once we become true diamonds, we will shine with the noor of Islam. We will see the radiance in our own lives and will become beacons of guidance for others as well. We all have the potential within us. All that we require is determination, perseverance and guidance.

May Allah Ta’ala transform us all into the gems of this Ummah, aameen.

From the Pen of Hazrat Moulana Yunus Patel Sahib (rahimahullah)



Creating an Environment of Taqwa

Letter	created by us. If we are desirous of the protection of our imaan and we want an environment where we can easily practice upon the teachings of sharee’ah, then we need to start from our own homes. Just by getting rid of the evil and sins in our homes and lives, we have achieved a spiritually clean environment. By establishing salaah and other ‘ibaadah, as well as the beautiful sunnah in our homes, we have achieved an Islamic environment. It is reported in the hadeeth that the true hijrah (migration) is to abandon sin. Therefore, this is the most important thing to do.	If we are sincere, our own homes will be a haven for steadfastness on Deen and protection of our imaan. Our ‘Ulama and Mashaayikh also encourage ta’leem in the home, on a daily basis. This will make it easy to establish a Deeni environment and strengthen our imaan and the imaan of our family members.
<i>Respected Moulana As Salaamu ‘alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakaatuh</i>	Where can I find an environment of Deen to live in? My imaan is so weak that I really need a Deeni environment to survive. Do you know of a good place that a Muslim can migrate to?	2. We have to move out of the house for work, travel, etc. so we need to develop taqwa in the heart and the conscious awareness of Allah Ta’ala. With taqwa, we will, insha-Allah, survive the fitnahs on the outside.
Reply <i>Bismillahir Rahmaanir Raheem Respected Brother / Sister</i>	No government forces us to indulge in adultery, gambling, drinking, consuming interest, watching the evil and immoral filth on the television, reading filthy literature and so forth. No one holds a gun to our heads and forces us to emulate the disbelievers in dress and culture, to have our marriages in the manner of the West, etc.	3. Of course, we are entirely dependent on Allah Ta’ala and we are also very vulnerable, so we should constantly make du’aa to Allah Ta’ala to assist us and protect us.
<i>Wa ‘alaikumus Salaam wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakaatuh</i>	1. We are living in times of fitnahs (trials). Wherever a person goes, there are fitnahs prevailing in some way or the other. You have to create an environment of Deen in your own home.	<i>Was Salaamu ‘alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakaatuh</i> Yunus Patel (Moulana)
I often explain that the environment is		