

Hurry Me to Paradise!

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There is a famous saying “When two elephants fight, the grass gets trampled. When two elephants make love, the grass still gets trampled.” What happens when two Mullas (Priests) fight? When I was growing up in Pakistan, I very often heard “do Mulla main aik murghi haram” i.e. when two Mulla fight, the chicken dies in vain. In the old days, when people were illiterate, they would call Mullas to slaughter chicken. They were paid for their services. It happened to be that on one occasion, two Mullas showed up to slaughter the same chicken. Since money was involved, they started fighting. During the fight, due to excessive pushing and pulling of the head and the leg, the poor chicken died without being slaughtered. I thought this could be a fictitious story to give a bad name to the Mullas, but a recent event gives a lot of credence to this saying.

It was a Sunday morning. I was out of town. The telephone rang. My wife answered the phone and said: “*Inna Lillahi wa Inna Elaihay Rajeoon* (We are all from God and to Him do we return)”. Hearing this phrase always give me a dread. During my school days, every once in a while my parents would inform me that so and so cousin of my grandfather or grandmother had died. We would grieve, read the Quran to send blessing on his or her soul, and then go back to our usual business. That is how it went throughout my school years. Once I started working, every once in a while I would get the news that so and so uncle or aunt of mine have died. As usual we would grieve, dust off and read the Quran, and go back to our normal routine. Now that I am approaching retirement age, I still get the same kind of news, except now it is about my friends and cousins. The call was about the untimely death of my friend of mine who had passed away the previous night and the funeral was that afternoon.

We, like adherents of other faiths, believe that our deceased will go straight to Paradise. But we take this belief to its logical end. We conduct the funeral within twenty four hours. After all, why should we keep the deceased waiting for the beautiful abode everybody is dying to go to? So what if some of us miss the funeral. Which is more important, my last viewing of the deceased or the deceased entering Paradise ASAP. Besides, we are all reminded at the beginning of each obligatory prayer, which occurs five times a day, to pray as if this is our last prayer. By the extension of this logic, when we are parting from each other, we assume that it could be our last meeting together.

I hurried back home, got ready for the funeral, and arrived at the mosque. The casket was already there. It was the same old casket that had been used in all the previous funerals. The body was wrapped in a couple of white cotton sheets. Since my friend was going to Paradise in a couple of hours where he would be adorned in fine silk clothes, would be reclining on raised carpeted throne encrusted with gold and precious stones in a grove of cool shade, and would be drinking hangover-free wine sealed with musk, we did not waste any money on his clothing or the casket.

But there was the rub. A priest had to lead the funeral prayer. His entry to Paradise depended upon a good eulogy by the priest for my friend. I have a tendency to diss people right and left, but not the priests. Knowing fully well that my entry to Paradise hinges upon a good eulogy by the priest, I maintain good terms with them. My friend, in order to cover all the bases, had good relations with priests of many persuasions. Lo and

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behold, not one, but two priests of two different persuasions showed up for his funeral. While we were all waiting for the funeral and wanting to get back to our worldly business, a tussle broke out between the two priests. Both of them wanted to give the final push to my friend, but my friend needed only one good push. People were not in the mood to offer two prayers for my friend either. In this day and age when so many suicide bombings are taking place all over the world and hundreds of people are dying in the blasts, shedding tears for one person has become very difficult. The priests were asking us to shed tears twice, when even once was challenging.

While one priest moved to the front to lead the prayer, the other priest held tight to the casket and would not allow it be moved to the front. This reminded me of Pakistani movies, where a villain would show up with a gun or a sword right when the bride and the groom were about to take the vow and proclaim that the marriage will not take place. The priest would not let my friend join all those pearly eyed Houries who were anxiously waiting for him up in Paradise.

The other priest started the prayer anyway without the casket being in front of him. I was wondering about how confused the angels must have been. It was like somebody giving the teller a deposit slip without the money. I am sure the angels gave the priest a rain check.

Not to be outdone, the other priest took the casket outside the mosque. He was of the belief that caskets cannot be placed in the mosque. I was wondering since my friend was always welcome in mosques of all the persuasions, why he must be barred from entry to the mosque now. Anyhow, the priest led another prayer with few of his friends. At least this time the angels had the prayer with the casket. No rain check for this priest. As if that was not enough, a fight broke out between the two priests, both trying to pull the casket in their direction. I was holding my breath and praying "O God do not let them do to my friend, what the two Mullas did to the chicken." My friend would then be dead for good. I could hear my friend, who used to sing "Take me out to the ballgame," was now crying from the casket: "Hurry me to Paradise! Hurry me to Paradise!" When two Mullas fight, not only could a chicken die in vain, your arrival to Paradise could also be delayed.

About the Writer:

The writer has authored "Secrets of Angels, Demons, Satan, and Jinns – Decoding their Nature through Quran and Science," "Atom to Adam – How, When and Where in the Light of Quran, Bible and Science (A Study of Human Origin)," and "Hunting to Cloning – Unearthing Civilizations through Quran" published by InstantPublisher.com (<http://instantpublisher.com/>) and "Lessons from the Qur'an," published by Ta-Ha Publishers (<http://www.taha.co.uk/>). These books are available from Amazon.com (<http://www.amazon.com/>) and Ta-Ha Publishers (<http://www.taha.co.uk/>), respectively. He has also published many essays on religious issues in the Charleston Gazette, West Virginia and has written quite a few Islamic satires and poems. He is a Chemical Engineer and possesses Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Chemical Engineering and has Professional Engineers license from the State of Texas. His e-mail address is mnajawaid@yahoo.com. Many of his writings can be viewed at MahmoodJawaid.com.