46455 - She faced social pressures that made her stop praying and take off hijab

the question

I am a young, single woman from … I work as an engineer in the ministry of industry as head of the department. I am respected and well-treated, and I have a masters degree in industrial engineering. I am from a close-knit and wealthy family that has connections with top people in the county, which has made our life easy, praise be to Allaah.
So far so good.
But the problem is that I feel alienated.
Since the age of fifteen, I have not been like the girls in my generation and my society. I hated mixing and I hated the fact that we had no interest in our religion. No day passed when I did not read Soorat al-Baqarah, Aal ‘Imraan, al-Rahmaan and Yaa-Seen, and recite a lot of du’aa’ and tasbeeh. I felt that I was better than my friends and the girls of my generation, and I felt that I was close to our Lord, and I had tranquillity and peace of mind.
During all this I refused everyone who came to propose marriage, because they were far away from religion and were not committed; they drank alcohol and did many other things that I feel too embarrassed to mention.
Sometimes those who regarded my mentality as backward would say: You are beautiful and you appear modern, but you are not enjoying your life and you are backward in your thinking like our grandmothers’ grandmothers.
Yet despite that my faith in Allaah was great and I was strong in the face of all the temptations of life. I found myself in many difficult situations but every time, I chose to be close to our Lord and I overcame my self that is inclined towards evil, praise be to Allaah.
For the first time I felt that I needed a righteous, religiously-committed husband. I felt that work and study were taking up all my time, but I needed to find a marriage partner and form a family and have children.
In order to protect myself against the group who I was with in a foreign country, I put on hijab and went to pray in the mosque, and this was for the first time in my life, but they were the happiest

days of my life, a wonderful experience.
I realized how far I was falling short in my religious commitment, and how ignorant I was about many things in my religion, and how awful and how faraway from religion our society is.
But when I went back to our country I took off the hijab due to social, professional and political reasons, but I felt even more alienated and I felt very depressed.
All the people think that I have changed a great deal, most of all my family, and because of that and in order to get me out of the state I am in, they decided to go for ‘umrah at the time of the Prophet’s birthday. , I went, with my father, mother and sister, and it was an indescribable delight. I enjoyed praying in al-Rawdah al-Shareef (the area between the Prophet’s minbar and grave) and I enjoyed praying and making du’aa’ in Makkah, and I enjoyed the conservative Saudi society. I enjoyed wearing the niqaab and abayah, as I have never enjoyed anything else. Those were some of the happiest days of my life. When I came back to my country, I took off the hijab. I had no choice but to follow the ways of my society, because of the demands of my job, i.e., meetings with men. I have no choice but to shake hands, and dress as they dress. I work all day until 6 p.m., then I go home and pray Zuhr and ‘Asr and Maghrib and ‘Isha’ all together, because at work we have no time or space to ourselves. Even the places where we could do wudoo’ are mixed.
I feel sick and tired, and I feel that my faith is very weak, and I am afraid of fitnah (temptation).
I cannot get married and I cannot live, I cannot do my religious duties and I feel alienated. Either I live like the rest of the people and accept an immoral evildoer (as a husband) – please excuse these words – or I leave this country where everything is detestable.
I have no objection to marrying someone from outside my country and leaving my country, so long as he is religiously committed and will help me to obey Allaah.
I have been to all the marriage websites on the internet and this is my last hope.
The problem now is that I have stopped praying and I have stopped reading Qur’aan because I feel that I am living a life of hypocrisy. I definitely want to wear hijab and I want to get married and protect myself from fitnah.
All my prayer is weeping and whenever I read Qur’aan I weep bitterly. My life has become very bitter.
Help me, save me from fitnah.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

We understand the extent of the problem that you are suffering and the extent of the pressure you are facing to give up your religion and your commitment. This problem is not yours alone, rather it is a problem faced by thousands of Muslims who want to adhere to the teachings of this great religion, and want to live a moral life of honour and chastity, but they face many problems in their societies that, unfortunately, have deviated from Islam to a large extent and now look down upon and scorn those who adhere to Islam, and governments that cause trouble for those who are committed to Islam. Everyone knows what is going on in your country, the war against Islam and those who are committed to it. We ask Allaah to foil their plots and support His religion and His believing slaves.

Secondly:

“The reward of Allaah is precious, the reward of Allaah is Paradise.” Thus said the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), and undoubtedly the precious reward needs a high price, and there is nothing more precious than Paradise. Hence the Muslim must accept that whatever difficulties he faces on his way to Paradise, they are to be expected, and in fact, no matter how hard it is, they pale into insignificance when compared with the delights that await him in Paradise.

This is what makes it easy for the Muslim to bear the calamities of this world and the difficulties that he faces on his path towards Allaah.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) has told us that the most destitute of the people in this world, of those who will enter Paradise, will be brought and dipped once in Paradise, and it will be said to him: O son of Adam, did you ever see anything bad? Did you ever experience any hardship? He will say: No, by Allaah, O Lord. I never saw anything bad and I never experienced

any hardship.”. Narrated by Muslim (2807).

The mind can imagine the state of this person, “the most destitute of the people in this world,” and imagine the worst of situations and trials, but one dip in Paradise will make him forget all that.

And the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) has told us about the days of patience, and that the one who adheres to his religion at that time will be like the one who takes hold of a burning ember. Perhaps the current time is what the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) meant, so we have no choice but to be patient and put up with hardships and even confront them, otherwise we may lose out in this world and in the Hereafter:

“By Al-‘Asr (the time).

2. Verily, man is in loss,

3. Except those who believe (in Islamic Monotheism) and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to the truth [i.e. order one another to perform all kinds of good deeds (Al-Ma‘roof) which Allaah has ordained, and abstain from all kinds of sins and evil deeds (Al-Munkar) which Allaah has forbidden], and recommend one another to patience (for the sufferings, harms, and injuries which one may encounter in Allaah’s Cause during preaching His religion of Islamic Monotheism or Jihad)”

[al-‘Asr 103]

Thirdly:

With regard to the social and political pressures that you are facing – and we understand how hard it is – we offer the following advice to you and to everyone who is facing a similar problem, whilst noting that under such pressures a Muslim may face severe difficulty in adhering to the rulings of Islam, so there may be no choice but to compromise and be content with partial commitment for fear of giving up commitment altogether. But that is subject to the condition that the Muslim always seeks that which is better and strives hard to overcome these difficulties and gradually seek to attain full commitment.

So this compromise is a temporary stage, it is not permanent.

Whatever a Muslim cannot do in full today because of the pressures he is facing, let him do whatever he can of it – even if there are shortcomings – until he gradually reaches a stage of full commitment and the society may accept his transformation from one stage to another, because that is easier than going through confrontations and problems.

There follows some advice, and we apologize for making it too long, but the matter is serious and of the utmost importance, and affects thousands and thousands of Muslims as we have said, so one or two words are not enough.

1 – "Laa hawla wa laa quwwata illa Billaah (there is no power and no strength except with Allaah)"

This is a beautiful phrase, and it is one of the treasures of Paradise. We have no power to change from one state to another, from disobedience to obedience, from imperfection to perfection, except with the help and guidance of Allaah.

So it is essential to seek the help of Allaah first and last. In Soorat al-Faatihah which the Muslim recites several times each day, it says (interpretation of the meaning): "You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything)" [al-Faatihah 1:5]. We cannot worship Allaah unless Allaah enables us and helps us to do that. Among the du'aa' of the people of Paradise are the words (interpretation of the meaning): "All the praises and thanks be to Allaah, Who has guided us to this, and never could we have found guidance, were it not that Allaah had guided us" [al-A'raaf 7:43]. And among the du'aa' of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) were the words: "Do not leave me to myself even for the blink of an eye." Al-Silsilah al-Saheehah (226).

So it is essential to seek the help of Allaah, rely on Him and be aware that all things are in His hand, and with the word "Kun (Be!)" He does whatever He wills.

So seek the help of Allaah and delegate your affairs to Him, and trust that Allaah will grant you a way out: "And whosoever puts his trust in Allaah, then He will suffice him" [al-Talaaq 65:3].

2 – Constant du’aa’

Say du’aa’ a great deal, asking Allaah to make things easier for you, to help you to do all that is good, to guide and to keep evil and its people away from you. ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allaah be pleased with him) used to say: “I am not worried whether Allaah will respond, but I am worried about whether I will be able to make du’aa’, because if I am helped to du’aa’, then the response will come with it.” Du’aa’ relieves distress and takes away worry.

The Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “There is no Muslim who says a du’aa’ in which there is no sin or severing of family ties, but Allaah will give him one of three things: either He will hasten to answer his prayer, or He will store it up for him in the Hereafter, or He will divert an equivalent evil from him.” They said: Then we will say a lot of du’aa’! He said: “Allaah can give more than that.” Narrated by Ahmad (10794), classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Targheeb (1633). The one who says du’aa’ is always in a good state, no matter how much du’aa’ he says, for Allaah is greater in goodness, blessing and grace.

3 – Worship, especially prayer

You have to pay attention to acts of worship, for they will revive the heart and alert the one who is negligent, and they are among the most important factors of steadfastness and the best help in achieving one’s goals, after the help of Allaah, may He be exalted.

The greatest act of worship is prayer, for it is the main foundation of faith after the shahaadatayn and it is the foundation of Islam. The heart has no life without prayer. It brings relief from all worries and hardships. Hence the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to say to Bilaal: “Let us find rest in it (the prayer), O Bilaal.” Saheeh Abi Dawood (4985). So pray, and focus with proper humility, and ponder, and weep, and relieve yourself of the worries and stress of this world.

4 –Reading the Holy Qur’aan

Read the Holy Qur’aan regularly, and have a portion of it that you read every day, and do not

neglect it. You should also have a brief Tafseer (commentary) that will help you to understand and ponder the meanings of the verses, such as Tafseer al-Sa'di or Aysar al-Tafaaseer by Shaykh Abu Bakr al-Jazaa'iri.

There is nothing greater than the words of Allaah, and there is no exhortation more eloquent than the exhortation of Allaah. There is no book that can offer guidance or relief from worry like the Qur'aan.

5 – Adhkaar and du'aa's

Always recite the adhkaar that are narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) at various times and on various occasions, such as the adhkaar for morning and evening, when going to sleep and when waking up, when eating and drinking, when going out of the house and when coming in, and in all situations. Be certain of the importance of understanding their meanings. Among the useful books on this topic are: al-Futoohaat al-Rabbaaniyyah bi Sharh al-Adhkaar al-Nawawiyyah by Ibn 'Allaan. This is a valuable book from which you can learn the meanings of the adkhaar, so that hearts may be revived and become connected to the Knower of the Unseen.

6 – Listening to useful lectures and khutbahs

Continue to listen to useful lectures and khutbahs, for you always need someone to remind you, guide you and advise you. From lectures etc you can learn a great deal about the rulings of Islam and how to behave at times of crisis.

7 – It is essential to read and learn.

It is essential for you to learn, read and educate yourself in Islamic matters, for "whomever Allaah wills good to, He causes him to understand Islam", as was narrated by al-Bukhaari and Muslim. So it is essential to know and understand the rulings of Islam. In many cases where things seem difficult and complicated, if a person learned the rulings or asked the scholars, he would find it easy and not complicated. There may be a concession of which he is not aware, or there may be

an alternative in sharee'ah that would make it easier for him. Among the useful books that we advise you to read is Fiqh al-Sunnah by Shaykh Sayyid al-Saabiq [this is available in English translation under the title Fiqh us-Sunnah, published in 5 volumes by American Trust Publications, Plainfield, IN]; al-Mulakhkhas al-Fiqhi by Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzaan; 'Awdat al-Hijaab by Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel. You can also learn from useful Islamic websites.

You should also read modern history, especially that of your own country, and how Islam has been fought, and what their plots were, for if the Muslim understands that, it will inspire him to face the challenge and make him adhere to Islam even more.

8 – With regard to marriage

It is undoubtedly very important, and will bring many benefits in your case, such as:

(a) Psychological stability, peace of mind and tranquillity.

(b) By Allaah's leave, it will be a means of reducing the social and family pressures on you, because you will be able to move to a new home, away from your family and neighbours and the society which is placing many restrictions on you that you cannot overcome.

(c) You will be able to raise righteous offspring in an atmosphere of chastity, trust, modesty and adherence to this religion, the upbringing that many of us have missed out on, unfortunately.

A person can do with his children that which he wishes that his parents had done with him. Raising righteous offspring is one of the most important benefits of marriage. The ummah is waiting for you and others like you who love this religion and want to adhere to it. They are waiting for righteous, believing offspring from you, through whom Allaah will benefit the ummah and change it for the better.

There are many other benefits that you will attain through marriage, hence we emphasize the importance of this issue. Based on the circumstances that you are suffering, the advice which we have to offer you is: if there comes to you one with whose religious commitment and character you are pleased, do not hesitate to accept, and if there is no such person then be content with one

who is “semi-committed”, for if we cannot find that which is perfect we must be content with the best that is available, even if it is not perfect. This advice is just for you, based on your particular situation.

We do not mean by this that you should be content with an evildoer or one who drinks alcohol, not at all. Rather what we mean is one who is righteous in general terms, who prays regularly and loves Islam in general, one who is of good character and chivalrous, who feels protective jealousy with regard to matters of honour, even if he has some other faults.

You could encourage him to improve, by means of your personality, your powers of persuasion and your wisdom in dealing with him, after Allaah guides you and him.

We do not agree that your going to websites is the last hope for you, rather hope never ceases. The Muslim always has hope and expects good from his Lord, and he thinks positively of his Lord Who says in the hadeeth qudsi: “I am as My slave thinks I am.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari and Muslim.

9 – With regard to the problem of hijab and your not being able to wear it

Once again, we state that we understand the extent of the war that you are facing in your country because of hijab, hence we think that there is no reason why – given your particular circumstances – you should not take a gradual approach to wearing hijab. What your parents and society may not accept today, they may accept gradually after a month or two, or a year.

You have to dress as modestly as possible, and try hard to cover your head. Wear clothes that are loose, then when the people get used to your dressing modestly, you can take another step forward, until you are wearing full hijab as Allaah has enjoined upon the believing women and as you yourself want and enjoyed wearing in the land of the two sacred mosques during your visit.

But do not be too hasty. Take it slowly, and you will attain what you want, in sha Allaah.

This is not the best way that the Muslim should follow, but it is acceptable in cases of necessity and in the particular circumstances that you are in. Attaining part of a thing is better than nothing,

and reaching perfection slowly is better than losing everything.

10 –With regard to prayer

Prayer is the greatest of the pillars of Islam after the Shahaadatayn. It is the connection between a person and his Lord, so you should pay a great deal of attention to it and it is essential to offer prayers regularly, at the proper times.

“Verily, As-Salaah (the prayer) is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours”

[al-Nisa’ 4:10]

We do not think there is any problem with regard to Fajr and ‘Isha’, or with Maghrib during the summer, when the time for Maghrib begins an hour or two after you come back from work.

Based on that, there is no excuse for delaying these prayers beyond the proper time, so strive hard to offer these prayers at the time decreed for them in sharee’ah.

That leaves Zuhr and ‘Asr, and also Maghrib during the winter.

The basic principle – as stated above – is that you should offer each of them at the proper time, so look for a time when the place for doing wudoo’ is free of men. If that is not possible, there is nothing wrong with entering the washroom and doing wudoo’ in there, and wudoo’ done there will be valid. In most cases its floor – even if it is wet – will be taahir (pure) and the water that is on it will be taahir, so there is nothing wrong with doing wudoo’ in there.

When praying, a woman is required to cover all of her body except her face and hands. If you cannot wear clothes like that for the time being, then keep a hijab or other garment for prayer in your office, that you can wear at the time of prayer.

There is no special place where prayers must be performed, rather prayers may be offered anywhere, so you can wait for a chance when you are alone in your office, and then pray.

If it is too difficult and you cannot offer every prayer on time, then we hope that you will have a

concession allowing you to join Zuhr and ‘Asr, so you can delay Zuhr until the time of ‘Asr and pray them together, but that is subject to the condition that it is done before the time for ‘Asr ends, and that is half an hour or forty-five minutes before sunset. If that is not possible, then you have a concession allowing prayer until sunset, but there is no excuse for delaying ‘Asr until after sunset.

With regard to Maghrib in the winter, if you can do it at work then this is what you must do, and if that is not possible then you may delay it and join it with ‘Isha’ at the time of the latter, and you can pray Maghrib and ‘Isha’ together when you go back home.

Remember that if you do that, you are not delaying the prayer beyond its proper time, because joining Zuhr and ‘Asr, and Maghrib and ‘Isha’, is permissible in cases of necessity and in order to ward off hardship, whether one is travelling or not, unlike shortening the prayers, which is not permitted except when travelling.

But you must try hard to offer every prayer at the proper time, and the Muslim should always be able to find a way. A senior military figure was unable to ask for permission to pray, lest he be accused of fundamentalism or terrorism and be put under watch, so he used to ask permission to go to the bathroom, where he would do wudoo’ then go and pray, and come back.

We do not think that you are incapable of coming up with some way and finding an opportunity to offer every prayer on time. If you cannot, then join Zuhr and ‘Asr as described above.

Finally, we would draw your attention to the fact that many of the problems that you are facing at work, such as delaying the prayers and not being able to wear hijab, are due to your working in a place where you mix with men.

A woman’s working in a place where she mixes with men, with no shar’i guidelines, leads to many negative consequences, as is obvious to you. Hence the wisdom of Islam dictates that this is haraam. If you can move to another department or another job where there are no men, this will solve your problems at work to a great extent, or you can choose to stop working altogether, unless you are facing pressure from your family to carry on working, in which case we hope that you have a concession to allow you to continue, whilst trying to avoid the bad things as much as

possible.

Finally, we will be happy to keep in ouch with you and offer advice, and we will be even happier to hear that you have acted upon this advice and that you have taken steps in the right direction.

We ask Allaah to make you steadfast and to help you to do all that is good, and to divert all evil away from you, and to bless you with righteous offspring.

And Allaah is the source of strength and the Guide to the right path.

And Allaah knows best.