

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

ISLAMIC BUSINESS (PART ONE)

A PAGE FROM THE LIFE OF HAZRAT MAULANA YUNUS PATEL
SAHEB (RAHMATULLAHI 'ALAYH)

A FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE IN RUNNING A BUSINESS¹

IT WAS AROUND 1971, when my late father-in-law went for Hajj. He was away for four months. In that time I managed his business. Although I had absolutely no experience about business, with the Fadhl (grace) of Allah Ta'ala, I ran the business, during those four months, in a manner that not only benefited my father-in-law, but which became an example for the people of the town also. Alhamdulillah.

The daily routine that was adopted, the set up in the business and the manner of interaction with customers is being outlined and shared, as a lesson. Insha-Allah, that experience will be a means of people, especially businessmen, channeling their efforts towards prioritising Deen over Dunya and giving preference to earning the Akhirah (Hereafter) over the chase for money and material commodities. The love for Dunya and attaching one's heart to it inevitably brings destruction to a person's Deen. Rasulullah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said: **"Two hungry wolves let loose on a flock of sheep**

¹ Taken from an informal Majlis

cannot cause as much destruction to the flock as the damage that one's greed for wealth and fame can inflict upon one's Deen."²

The timetable, whilst running the business, was as follows:

After the Fajr Salaah it was my practice to recite Yaseen Shareef and other Azkaar. Thereafter I would proceed to the shop. I used to open the shop at around 8:30 a.m.

BUSINESS AND SALAAH

There is no doubt that during business hours, there is a demand for hard work. You have to buy, sell and keep up with everything else related to the business. You cannot just let things be and expect a business to prosper. For those few hours, you have to make the effort and work hard. However, if the Zuhr Azaan was at 1 p.m., then from 12:30 p.m. we started arranging for the customers to leave the shop, so that by 12:45 or 12:50 the last customers could leave and **we could be in the Masjid before the Azaan**. Alhamdulillah, the same procedure was adopted for Asr Salaah.

After the Zuhr Salaah, I would go home for lunch, and then return to the shop to continue with business. On a Friday, I used to travel from Richmond to Pietermaritzburg or Ixopo for Jumu'ah. **The shop remained closed until my return**. Alhamdulillah, this is how we managed and operated the business in those months.

On Saturdays, it was extremely busy in that small town. All the buses and cars, transporting hundreds of people, would stop just outside the shops. The people would just go on buying and buying. Because

² Tirmidhi 2482

of my routine with regard to closing for Zuhr Salaah, some of the town's people commented: *"Now we will see what happens. All the shops remain open during Zuhr time on Saturdays – not one closes in this busy time."*

However, I kept up to my routine. I finished off between 12:30 p.m. and 12:45 p.m. and went to the Masjid. Alhamdulillah, when I came back from Salaah, the customers were there, waiting. Alhamdulillah, this set an example for others to also close for Zuhr on a busy day as well.

I have mentioned previously that the non-Muslims also run businesses – and big businesses. They have clear notices at their entrances detailing their business hours and times for the entire week, such as Monday to Friday, Saturday, Sunday, public holidays, etc. Anyone who wants to purchase anything from these stores knows and understands that they will have to get there in those hours only. The customers work around their own activities and responsibilities, and they get there in time, to buy whatever they want to. **So ... why can we not have our Salaah times also detailed on our notices? Why can we not close for Salaah? Why do we distrust the promise of Allah Ta'ala?** If someone wants to purchase something, he will know the hours of business and will come in those hours. This personal experience that I am relating to you proves this.

BUSINESS AND CUSTOMERS

As for the items that were being sold; if there was something in the shop, which in my opinion was not proper to sell, I gave it away or sold it under the cost price. If it was more doubtful than Halaal, then I just gave it away.

There were customers who would buy bread, milk, sugar, and other necessities. Some of them were extremely poor. They would tell me what they wanted. However, when they opened their purses, I could see that they did not have enough money. They used to count the coins they had and sometimes they would have to leave out some items due to insufficient money. It was obvious that the person was a very poor person. One could clearly see their poverty. Some would also mention their plight: they were struggling to make ends meet, they had no job and had three or four children to take care of, etc. Their destitution and need was evident. ...In this way, I got to know about their lives and the hardships some of them faced.

So I would ask: *“How much do you have?”*

If the person had R10 – and in that time R10 was a lot of money – I would then look at the total cost for the groceries that had been taken. If it was, for example, R12, I would say: *“Take the whole thing and keep your R10 too.”*

Upon hearing this, often that old lady or old man would actually start jumping around to express their happiness and appreciation. They would then go and bring more customers and come again. Obviously the situation nowadays is different. I am not saying that you should just give away everything to everyone. What will be left of the business? However, there are still many genuinely poor people. As Muslims, we should show mercy, compassion and leniency towards them. Rasulullah ﷺ gave Dua to such a person: **“May Allah have mercy on a man who is lenient when selling, buying, and seeking repayment.”**

When my father-in-law returned, the neighbour said to him: *“Your son-in-law must have run you bankrupt because the shop was more closed than opened!”*

I told my father-in-law: *“Don’t worry. Have a rest first, for two or three days.”*

When I gave him the books and the money, there was a 25% to 30% increase in business. He even asked in surprise: *“How did that happen?”*

Alhamdulillah, at least I can say from the Mimbar that it is not just something theoretical. It is something that was practical and it was experienced while being ‘hands-on’ in running a business. People say: *“What do the Aalims know about business! They always talk theory. Do this, do that, don’t do this, don’t do that...”* Here was a 30% increase in business, in lesser time, and with the Salaah performed on time in the Masjid. Alhamdulillah, there was no lying, no stealing, no cheating and no deceiving anybody. ...The staff used to repeatedly say: *“We wish you stay in this business full time.”*

Alhamdulillah, I make Shukr to Allah Ta’ala for these are incidents – since it offered some inspiration and incentive to the businessmen there.

May Allah Ta’ala grant us all the Taufeeq of doing business in a manner which is most pleasing to Allah Ta’ala, and which will be a means of great rewards and goodness, in both worlds.