

Opening the heart to a bosom friend

Sept 27, 2026

**Dear Bhai MNA Chaudhary Sahab,
Asak !**

This is regarding changing the date for our batch get-together in October next which originally was for Oct 31.

Yesterday after the lunch was over, on way out of the Civil Services Club, Nazira was in conversation, standing amidst some of the batchmates. When the discussion regarding the next gtg date came up she apologetically mentioned that she would have to miss the event on 31st as she has to travel out of Delhi that morning.

Siddharth and Roye affectionately said that they would get the date changed to suit Nazira's availability; that's how they came up with 30th Oct. And, by the way, all that happened when I was out of their hearing distance - with another small segment of friends.

Later on, while Nazira and I were traveling back home in the car, Roye called me and, between the lines, I could discern his unease and anxiety. He told me that you (MNAC) have said, (and I feel, rightly so) that 30th is Friday and if it could be avoided that's better (for obvious reasons). Yet, I did not put my foot down - stopping him from fixing the date for 30th, that's Friday.

So, in that context, I have to make certain submissions for your kind consideration.

More than a decade ago. I had received an invitation and attended an international conference in Paris of those 22 countries in the world where Muslims are in minority, though they are in substantial numbers and in double digit percentage. The theme of that rendezvous was LIVING WHERE WE DON'T MAKE THE RULES.

The brainstorming deliberations had concluded with a benevolent confluence of opinions and, in fact, together we chalked out certain SOP guiding our behavior in such countries. One such rule was that in any social setting when a decision is being taken, formal or informal, the minority should avoid such a situation where its devoutness is likely to become a factor in such decision-making, much less becoming an irritant to the majority community. It was also observed that Islamic history shows that such an approach pays off with the added element of divine help.

Secondly, you would recall that when Sufis came to India, they adopted a strategically well thought-out methodology. They learned about the local culture and societal customs, and they tried to imbibe some of such native traditions. Added to that was their extremely gentle disposition. That helped them to create space in the hearts of the local majority which started believing that Sufis are the persons whom they must be friends with.

Thirdly, when a person is having discomfort in the knee joint, the doctor usually does not begin treating the knee itself. Instead, he devises ways to strengthen the surrounding parts of the body like the ankle, the foot, the calf and, in the upper portion of the leg, the femur, the thigh, the hips, etc. That works very well and, in the domain of interpersonal behavior, I've named this as 'physiotherapeutic approach'.

Fourthly, the Shariat interpretations provide scope for situational exemptions in respect of Friday prayers (praying Zohr instead), given a particular set of circumstances.

Fifthly, we need to take a look at the overarching mandate defining the divine purpose of creating the humanity. That is: So that God tests as to who amongst us is more serviceable to the fellow beings.

In any case, before responding to Roye on telephone yesterday, I had rapidly figured out deep in my sub-conscience that I would locate a mosque in Lutyen's Delhi where the Friday prayers are held at a comparatively early time of the day, and after dropping Nazira at the club on 30th I would quickly go and offer my prayers in such a mosque and would come back to join the get-together in the club even though I would be a little late to reach there.

Hope you'd kindly excuse me for taking your time in reading this long note.

Warm regards

**Wassalaam,
Syed Zafar Mahmood**