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# SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

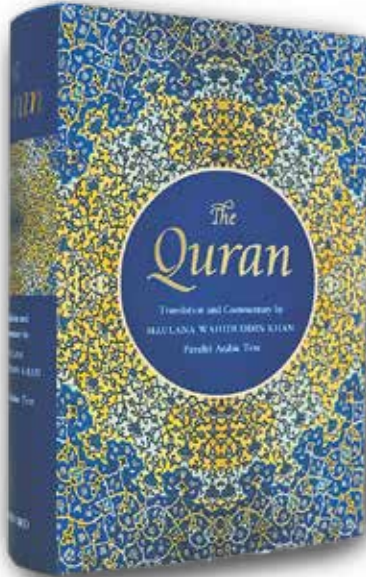


**There is no greater sacrifice  
than that of one's own opinion.**

# The Quran

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY  
**MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN**  
PARALLEL ARABIC TEXT

*This commentary on the Quran is a concise, easy-to-read guide that enables today's readers to understand the deeper meanings of the Quran and to reflect upon its relevance in the present world. It focuses on the main themes of the Quran, such as God-realization, enlightenment, closeness to God, remembrance, prayer, peace and spirituality. It lays stress on the fact that through reflection, deep thinking and contemplation, divine lessons can be learnt from the signs of God scattered across the world.*



*This commentary thus explains the meaning of the Quran in such a way as to give readers a clearer understanding of the message of the Quran and helps them in finding their own way of making it relevant to themselves.*

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# SPIRIT OF ISLAM

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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

ISSUE 40 APRIL 2016

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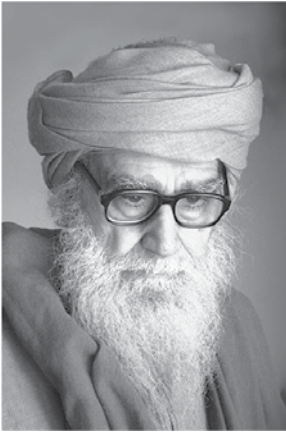
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# CONTENTS

■ FROM MAULANA'S DESK	3
■ RUNNING AFTER TWO HARES	5
■ THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION—PART I	6
■ THE IMPORTANCE OF TIME	11
■ ADVICE FOR THE KASHMIRI YOUTH	13
■ TOWARDS GLOBAL PEACE	15
■ WE BELONG TO GOD	21
■ FROM THE SPIRITUAL TREE	22
■ CREATIVE SOLUTION	24
■ SOUND SPEECH	25
■ THE TREASURE OF GOD REALIZATION	27
■ THE AGE OF ALTERNATIVES	28
■ SERVICE TO MANKIND	31
■ SALVATION	34
■ UNENDING WAR	35
■ INCREASING IN FAITH	37
■ UNIVERSAL MESSAGE FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP	38
■ THE WORD OF GOD	41
■ ASK MAULANA	44

# FROM MAULANA'S DESK



*Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, born in 1925, in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, is an Islamic spiritual scholar who is well-versed in both classical Islamic learning and modern disciplines. The mission of his life has been the establishment of worldwide peace. He has received the Padma Bhushan, the Demiurgus Peace International Award and Sayyidina Imam Al Hassan Peace award for promoting peace in Muslim societies. He has been called 'Islam's spiritual ambassador to the world' and is recognised as one of its most influential Muslims<sup>1</sup>. His books have been translated into sixteen languages and are part of university curricula in six countries. He is the founder of the Centre for Peace and Spirituality based in New Delhi.*

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## THE PROBLEM OF INTOLERANCE

**I**T is said that there is rising intolerance in India. I do not agree with this statement. This is because intolerance is a phenomenon of society, not a phenomenon of India or any particular country.

Intolerance is only an improper name for differences of opinion. Where there are human beings there will be differences and if differences are not managed it will lead to intolerance. In truth, intolerance is a phenomenon of unmanaged differences. Intolerance in itself, is nothing.

In Islam the virtue of *sabr* or patience is emphasized greatly. According to the Quran, 'Patience is the most rewardable act.' (39: 10). Keeping patience is the art of difference management. The principle of life is that if differences are managed, it will lead to development. If differences are not managed, the result will be breakdown. Therefore, instead of reacting to differences one should manage them wisely.

*Those who want to do something about the issue of intolerance must not protest against it in speech or writing, but educate the masses.*

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1. The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims 2012, Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Jordan.

The responsibility to adhere to patience falls most on one who might become the victim when differences flare into confrontation. According to the law of nature, resorting to complaint and protest after being inflicted with harm will not prove to be of any use. The right way is that a person should understand the situation, do peaceful planning and sedulously avoid provoking others. From the beginning to the end, life is a struggle. In such a scheme, there is no room to complain about intolerance, rather one should learn to manage the situations that have the potential to take the form of intolerance.

Just talking about intolerance is tantamount to escaping from one's duty. If at all one wants to play a constructive role as regards this issue, one should educate members of the society.

***In life there is no room to complain about intolerance, rather one should learn to manage the situations that have the potential to take the form of intolerance.***

I once happened to meet a social activist who said that previously he was engaged in social work, but had abandoned it because he realized that his social activism was a kind of social critique. Therefore, those who want to do something about the issue of intolerance must not protest against it in speech or writing, but educate the masses.

The government cannot do anything substantial in this matter, because it involves training minds of people so that they can understand that unwanted situations will always remain in society; one should not react against them but rather consider them natural. We have to explain to people the value of tolerance rather than criticizing the government or political authorities for inaction. □

**Maulana Wahiduddin Khan**  
*editor@thespiritofislam.org*



## **Be Rational**

*If you want to be successful, try to steer your life in a rational manner. Don't give it over to your desires.*

# RUNNING AFTER TWO HARES

*Jack of All, Master of None*

**L**IVING between two agendas is against the law of nature. Those who have developed this habit cannot achieve anything substantial. Super-achievement needs super endeavour done with a single-focused mind. Those whose attention is diverted in different directions shall fail to achieve great success.

The Quran describes such a character in the following words:

God knows those of you who slip away on some pretext. Let those who go against His order beware lest some affliction befall them or they receive a painful punishment. (24: 63)

This verse is equally relevant in both religious and secular affairs. A proverb describes this reality in the following words:

If you run after two hares, you will catch neither. (Anonymous)

A multi-focused person is one who while performing a task is simultaneously thinking on other matters. A single-focused person is one who thinks and makes a single point as his goal and does not take any excuse to shift his focus.

Scientific research has discovered that man has a single-focused mind. Anyone who tries to live with multiple foci would act contrary to the scheme of things set by the Creator. Just as man cannot use his hand for twin purposes—as a hand as well as a foot—similarly he should not try to focus on several matters. A multi-focused mind ultimately becomes a “Jack-of-all, Master of none!” ❑

***Those whose attention is diverted in different directions shall fail to achieve great success.***



## ***Art of Management***

*The ups and downs in life are subjects of management. Learn this art of management and both these experiences in life will prove to be beneficial for you.*

# THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION—PART I

## *Worship of God*

*The only true religion in God's sight is complete submission to God. And those who were given the Book disagreed only out of rivalry, after knowledge had been given to them—he who denies God's signs should know that God is swift in His reckoning.* (THE QURAN 3: 19)

**W**ORSHIP: What God most earnestly desires from human beings is worship. The Quran says: 'I have not created *jinn*<sup>2</sup> and mankind except to worship Me.' (51: 56) There are numerous such verses in the Quran which elaborate on how the prophets were sent for this very purpose, that is, to warn or to remind man of this responsibility (16: 36). This is so important a matter that if a man cannot find opportunities for worship in his own country, he is enjoined to leave it for some other place (4: 97).

*In the Islamic Shariah the word worship is used to express a condition of extreme love coupled with extreme humility and apprehension.*

The dictionary defines worship as bowing before someone and humbling oneself. According to the *Lisan al Arab* (The Arabic Dictionary), 'The essence of worship is fearfulness and humility'. That is why the Quran uses the word 'arrogance' as the antonym of worship. It says, 'Those who are too arrogant to worship Me will certainly enter Hell.' (40: 60)

Although worship's real connotations are humility and fearfulness, when the word is used in relation to God, it also includes the concept of love. In the Islamic *Shariah* (moral code and religious law of Islam) the word worship is used to express a condition of extreme love coupled with extreme humility and apprehension.

The essence of worship then is the adoption of an attitude of humility before God. In the Quran, this is expressed by different Arabic words in many verses. Enshrined in each of these words is the concept of God-consciousness. To worship God means utter prostration of oneself before Him. The Being before whom the act of worship is performed is no tyrant or tormentor but an extremely kind and compassionate Being, to whom we owe limitless blessings. So this expression of lowliness before Him is necessarily tinged with love.

The relation of man to God is the relation of extreme humility with an extremely beloved Being. At the very moment when man is shivering



in awe of God, when his eyes fill with tears at the thought of Him, his best feelings are reserved for his Lord, and he draws closer to God in great attachment. Man, then, finds himself rapt in a love of the greatest poignancy. Though his humility in the presence of God is undoubtedly the result of fear, this fear is not of the kind produced by the sight of a fearful object. It is a feeling which no single word can properly convey. It is a mixed feeling of extreme hope and extreme apprehension. Man is never able to decide which of the two is to be preferred—hope or apprehension. It is a situation of love and fear in which man runs towards the very Being he fears, hoping to receive from Him, His divine blessings. It is a state of mental anguish, yet at the same time it is a state of complete solace.

Thus we learn that prayer is basically a psychological experience rather than an external event. Man, in the last analysis, is a sensitive thinking being: so in its definitive form, prayer in relation to man, is the expression of an inner state rather than of an external happening. The Prophet has clearly stated that, "righteousness is a thing of the heart." According to the Quran, the essence of worship is to be God-fearing. This finds expression in a *Hadith* (sayings and deeds of the Prophet of Islam). Once the Prophet observed pointing to his heart, 'The fear of God lies here.' (*Bukhari*).

***The relation of man to God is the relation of extreme humility with an extremely beloved Being.***

The Quran states: 'People, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, so that you may become righteous.' (2: 21)

Worship, in terms of external expression means bowing before the Sustainer, while in its inner sense it stands for that deep realization of and strong attachment to God in which man is so involved that he can experience the very presence of God. The Prophet is reported to have said, "Pray to God as if you are seeing Him." (*Mishkat*). According to this saying, the most sublime form of worship is that in which the worshipper is so lost in thoughts of God that he finds himself very close to Him. His apprehension of the divine presence should be as keen as if God were actually seeing him. This state of psychological proximity is the most sublime state of prayer.

All rites of worship are aimed at arriving at that state. The postures to be adopted in the performance of these rites are ordained by God Himself. Anyone who asserts that it is possible to pray to God independently of

these God-ordained rites, is making a false claim. Without performing these rites, no one can become a worshipper in the real sense of the word. Although man is another name for that particular soul which is not visible to us, it is also a fact that man's existence cannot be conceived of in this world without a human body. Similarly, worship may be a psychological reality, but it cannot be conceived of without external God ordained religious rites.

Although the word 'worship' covers the entire *Shariah*, in the sense that it embraces whatever man does to follow God's commandments and to seek His pleasure, it is his adoration for God which provides the stimulus for all of his actions. Basically and primarily, worship denotes this particular relationship between man and God. When a man is

***The most sublime form of worship is that in which the worshipper is so lost in thoughts of God that he finds himself very close to Him.***

offering *salat* (prayer) he is directly engaged in the worship of God. He bows before the Almighty Who has no equal. Whereas, when he obeys God's commandments relating to moral and social dealings with his fellowmen, he fulfils his duties in relation to his fellowmen. From the point of view of performance, these requirements are as obligatory as particular acts of worship. But the difference in nature between the two must be kept in view, for

otherwise the true concept of religion cannot be properly understood. While human duties are always contingent upon circumstances, religious duties are absolute.

Let us take an example to clarify the above statement. According to God's law, it is the duty of a Muslim to distribute to certain entitled people whatever he receives in inheritance. This however does not mean that everyone must strive to acquire property so that this religious obligation may be fulfilled. It means rather that if a Muslim should receive an inheritance—some property or wealth—his faith demands that he deals with it according to the commandment regarding inheritance. It is a duty which is obligatory only on having inherited something, far from it being incumbent on every individual in an absolute sense, as worship is.

This explanation of worship makes it clear that the relationship of love and fear of God is not just to serve as an "incentive" in practical life, but is rather the actual goal that we must strive to achieve in this world. All our acts have one aim—to become the means to the psychological discovery which is known as 'entering into a relationship with God' and 'reaching God.' That is to say that the relation between God and man is

not just one of supposition (e.g. if we repeat certain words and actions, God in heaven will be pleased with us). Far and beyond this there is a direct link between God and man. This attitude of adoring servitude, in its external form, is obedience to God's commandments, but its inner reality means carrying man to the point where he can 'meet' God, where he may whisper to his Lord, where he may cry and break down in His presence, where he may feel that he is prostrate at the feet of his Creator. To find God thus in this life is the highest and most sublime reality of religion. The aim of all rites and commandments of religion is to raise man to this level. One who finds God thus in this world, will surely find Him in the next world; one who has failed to find Him on earth should not expect to find Him in the world hereafter.

What are the signs of having found this spiritual wealth? One of the signs is that man begins to receive divine provision (THE QURAN 20: 131). In complying with God's commandments, whatever one does is apparently a matter of one's own choice: one may or may not carry them out. But during the performance of these acts, or rites of worship, one experiences particular inner feelings which are not a matter of one's own choice, that is, one cannot produce them on one's own.

Then where do these inner feelings come from? These actually come from God. This is 'food' for the believer without which his spiritual personality cannot not be developed. It is like the divine provision which Mary received directly from God when living in the care of the Prophet Zakariya (THE QURAN 3: 37). When one observes a religious practice, one becomes aware of a special kind of feeling. This feeling is a reward from God for good deeds. The believer receives it the very moment he makes himself deserving of it.

***Although worship is a psychological reality, it cannot be conceived of without external God ordained religious rites.***

When our Lord accepts any of our deeds, we surprisingly experience spiritual feelings within ourselves. This is the introduction to Paradise that God has promised to righteous believers. It is the fragrance of the Garden of Paradise which believers find in this world. Although these inner feelings take the form of a spiritual anguish, they are more piquant by far than anything in this world. They cannot be compared with worldly delights. Intuition tells us that these inner feelings are reflections of that superior, divine reward which is called Heaven. It is said, therefore, in the Quran that the Heaven into which the believers will enter in the Hereafter will be a "known provision"

(37: 41) to them. It will not be a thing unknown, but a thing with which they were already acquainted in the life of this world:

He will admit them to Paradise He has made known to them.

(THE QURAN 47: 6)

The Prophet has said, "The man who goes to Heaven will recognise his home even better than he recognised his house on earth." (*Bukhari*).

When men give charity "with their hearts filled with awe..." (23: 60); when they are able to recite the Quran in such a way that their eyes are "filled with tears" (5: 83); when, while intensely remembering God, they "forsake their beds to pray to their Lord in fear and hope" (32: 16); when they experience such painful moments as realising the truth of what is stated in the Quran: "...and the love of God is stronger in the faithful" (2: 165); when they have the most sublime spiritual experiences; when some hidden truths are unveiled before them; when, with restless hearts and quivering lips, they call their Lord with such inspired words as had never before come to their lips, then they are actually receiving divine provision from their Lord. They are tasting one of the many fruits that their Lord has reserved for them.

In this world these fruits take the form of spiritual experiences; in the next world they will take the form of heavenly rewards. Then the faithful will feel that these are the very things of which they had been given a foretaste on earth: "Whenever they are given fruit to eat, they will say: 'This is what we were given before,' for they shall be given the like." (2: 25)

***The Heaven into which the believers will enter will not be a thing unknown, but a thing with which they were already acquainted in the life of this world.***

What the people of Paradise are going to receive in the life hereafter has already been introduced to them in the life they left behind. How foolish it would be if they imagined that in the next life they would be introduced to tastes, with which they had been previously

unacquainted. Similarly, in this life, if one has not previously passed through phases of feeling closer to God than to all others, how can one expect proximity with God in the Hereafter? Surely, prayer deserves such a great reward as will cool the eyes of the worshippers in the Hereafter. But this reward will be shared only by those who had known in the world such prayers as had been alluded to by the Prophet: "I found the balm of my eyes in worship" (*Nasai*). □

2. In this world in addition to human beings and angels, there is another set of creatures known as jinn. Human beings cannot see them but, in the Quran they have been mentioned in several places. These verses show that among the jinn also there are guided and misguided types.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF TIME

## *Your Greatest Asset*

**L**ORD Chesterfield was born in London in 1694 and died there in 1773. His letters addressed to his son, which were later published, described the art of success. In one letter, for instance, he writes, 'I recommend you to take care of the minutes, for the hours will take care of themselves.'

That is to say that if you can save your minutes, your hours will of themselves be saved. Taking care of the parts is just as good as taking care of the whole. This is because the whole is made up of parts. Mostly people tend to neglect the part in favour of the whole. This mentality ultimately results in failure at some later stage.

Never waste a moment of your available time. By availing of your moments you can be the possessor of your months and years. Wasting minutes will cause you to lose months if not years.

If you are wasting, daily, just five minutes of your hour, this will amount to wasting two hours in twenty four hours. This will eventually come to 60 hours in a month, and 720 hours in a year. This is how the majority of people have been wasting most of their available time. A man whose life span is eighty hardly makes full use of 40 years of his time.

***Take care of the minutes, for the hours will take care of themselves.***

Time is your greatest asset. Be meticulous about saving it. All great success ultimately boils down to an accumulation of small successes. Once you are ready to achieve a small success, a big success will by itself come your way. Here is a practical example of how this apparently trivial piece of advice can have great results.

Molvi Lutfullah, born in 1802 in Dharagar (an ancient city of Malwah) was an ordinary tutor. He had not received any of his education in an English school even for a single day, yet his autobiography was published in 1857 by Smith Aldara and Co., London. It was titled: '*Autobiography of Lutfullah: A Mohammedan Gentleman.*' This book included a foreword by Mr. East Weck who in commending the excellence of the English written by Molvi Lutfullah, expressed his amazement at how an Indian could write such an exhaustive book in a foreign language.

How did Molvi Lutfullah come to be capable of writing a book which was not only published in London in 1857, but which was held praiseworthy for its language by the English publisher? The secret is expressed in this saying: "Little by little becomes great."

*If you are wasting,  
daily, just five  
minutes of your hour,  
this will amount to  
wasting 720 hours in  
a year.*

Molvi Lutfullah learnt English by his own efforts. He used to teach Hindustani, Persian and Marathi languages to the English employees of the East India Company. The number of his students is put at 100. It was this contact with the English that made him feel interested in learning the English language. He began studying English privately. By working hard continuously for eight years, he managed to have full command over it. He

has written in his book that during those eight years, not even a single night passed without having committed to memory ten words of the English language, or without having thoroughly learnt a few pages from Dr. Gilchrist's Grammar. 'Ten words' appear to be of no significance, but when multiplied over eight years this step can turn a man into a foreign language writer capable of claiming appreciation even from native speakers who are masters of the language. □



### ***Negative to Positive Force***

*When we restrain ourselves from reacting to unpleasant situations, the negative energy that builds up inside is converted into a positive force. This in turn helps in our intellectual development, increases our creative thinking and benefits our personality.*

# ADVICE FOR THE KASHMIRI YOUTH

## *Hundred Percent Literacy*

**M**OHAMMAD AFZAL GURU (30 June 1969-9 February 2013) was born in Kashmir. He was convicted and given a death sentence in India for his role in the December 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament. On 2 January 2016, a heavily armed group attacked the Pathankot Air Force Station in an attempt to derail the peace process between India and Pakistan.

Afzal Guru left behind a good legacy, which his son stated after his death. Here is a report from *The Times of India*, which provides details of the advice given by Afzal Guru to his son:

The Pathankot attackers said they wanted revenge for the hanging of Afzal Guru; and in the Kashmir valley, Afzal Guru's "martyrdom" has become a rallying cry. But Afzal Guru's 17-year-old son Ghalib Abdul Guru says he has nothing to do with the *azaadi* (freedom) sentiment and wants to become a doctor and study at AIIMS.

Ghalib has just scored 95 per cent in his Class X board exams and hopes to become a doctor. Speaking to *The Times of India* from his maternal grandfather's home in Sopore, Ghalib says he wants to get an MBBS degree just like his dad. "I used to meet dad in prison. The Crime Patrol told me he had done something bad and had hurt some people that's why he was in jail. When I met him he used to tell me to study hard all the time and do well at my studies, to look after my mother and read the Quran."

***The best policy for the Kashmiri youth is to leave the political issues of Kashmir to be decided by the Kashmiri leaders and devote all their time and energy to securing excellent higher education.***

What are his memories of his father? "I don't remember him very well. All I remember is he used to always stay with his books, always reading and studying. He used to tell me to do the same. He used to say everything is in the hands of the Almighty. Whatever is written in your *naseeb* (fate), that's what will happen."

So is Ghalib also religious? "Yes, I read the Quran also. But I am mostly busy with my studies. I study all the time, I stay alone a lot as I am an only child," he says.

*(I want to be a doctor, study in AIIMS: Ghalib Abdul Guru, son of Afzal Guru, The Times of India, January 12, 2016)*

This is a good advice from a departed soul; there is no doubt about it. If generalised, it can be said that this is the best advice for all the youth of Kashmir. The youth in Kashmir should avoid taking part in the confrontational politics being carried out in the name of freedom of their state. They should build a career for themselves in education. If they do so, it would be good for them and also for the whole of Kashmir.

***Education is the only guarantee for the future. No other pursuits, can be a guarantee for a better future.***

Political problems are not a monopoly of Kashmir. Every country and region has its share of political problems. The best policy for the Kashmiri youth is to leave the political issues of Kashmir to be decided by the Kashmiri leaders and devote all their time and energy to securing excellent higher education. In this way, they would be able to fulfill their ambitions in a much better way.

According to biological laws, youth is the most productive age. The best advice for the Kashmiri youth is that they should not waste it by indulging in politics, rather they should make education their topmost priority and work towards excelling in it. Education is the only guarantee for their future. No other pursuits, can be a guarantee for a better future.

The state of Kerala is a model for Kashmiris. According to recent reports, Kerala has hundred percent primary education with the highest literacy rates in India. Kashmiri youth should work on a similar mission and make Kashmir a hundred percent literate state. □



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# TOWARDS GLOBAL PEACE

*We often talk of peace in the context of war. But this is a very narrow and restricted notion of peace. Peace is deeply linked with the entirety of human life. Peace is a complete ideology in itself. Peace is the only religion for both—man and the universe. It is the master-key that opens the doors to every success. Peace creates a favourable atmosphere for success in every endeavour. Without peace, no positive action—small or big—is possible.*



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## POLITICAL EXTREMISM AND ISLAM

**T**HE Quran teaches us not to be extremist in our religion. Its exact words are: 'People of the Book! Do not go to extremes in your religion.' (4: 171)

We also learn from a saying of Prophet Muhammad that extremist tendencies have always been the chief reason for religious groups going astray. That is why the Prophet once observed:

*"Sedulously refrain from extremism, for previous communities were destroyed only because of their extremist tendencies in religious matters".*

*Ghulu*, meaning extremism, is engendered in a religious community when it goes into a state of decline, and this, in fact, is a sign of its degeneration. There is a tradition of Prophet Muhammad which forewarns his followers of the rot that has set in. He said that all those evils which had arisen in previous communities would also arise in his own community on a greater scale. To make his meaning clear, he said:

*"Where previous communities were divided into 72 sects Muslims will be divided into 73 sects."*

*Although there are many actions which in form appear to be morally acceptable, it is to the spirit of these acts rather than their external form that Islam attaches real importance.*

There are innumerable cases of ideological extremism in Islamic history. But we also find among Muslims another kind of extremism

which probably never existed in previous communities. When the Prophet said that while the previous communities were divided into seventy-two sects and the Muslims would be divided into seventy-three sects, he was giving an example of this other kind of *ghulu* (extremism) which can be described as political extremism. No previous community had ever been crowned by such political glory as was enjoyed by the Muslims for almost a thousand years after the emergence of Islam. Political glory was not, however, a part of the Islamic creed, but a part of history. But Muslims stressed this fact of political glory to such an extent that, for all intents and purposes, it became incorporated in their religious creed. The result of this political extremism is the violent *jihad* we experience in the Muslim world of today.

Ultimately, extremist concepts such as 'Muslims are God's vicegerents on earth and, as such, they have their right to rule over other communities', were developed. Religion came to be regarded as synonymous with a complete state and a religion of this nature could not be fully observed unless it was established as the basis and framework of the state. Those promoting these ideologies and politicising Islam believed that Muslims were a superior community with the right to treat other communities as inferior. As a result to this day, Muslims find it difficult to tolerate any sort of dominance. They believe that their religious obligations can never be fully discharged just by performing prayers and observing fasting. They imagine that it is incumbent upon them to strive to establish divine rule on earth.

***People will remain ignorant of the true spirit of Islam so long as they are conversant only with its forms and attach importance only to the externals.***

A set of beliefs such as these has nothing to do with the religion as revealed by God. It is nothing but a case of political extremism. But present day Muslims are largely under the influence of this extremist way of thinking—

some consciously and others unconsciously.

Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, achieved considerable political success while he was still alive, and this was built on rapidly by his successors, the Caliphs. Unfortunately along with success comes the opportunity to abuse it. That is why, according to the *Hadith*, the Muslims were divided in terms of ideological extremism, into seventy-two sects, while the seventy-third sect was concerned with political extremism. Of course, the evil of ideological extremism is found as much in Muslim as in other communities, but it is the former's bent of political extremism that has aggravated the issue further.

Congregations led by earlier prophets did not achieve political success during their prophets' lifetimes. Their prophets only left them an ideological legacy. That is why we find political extremism absent in them. At the most, they can indulge only in ideological extremism.

According to the Quran (22: 78) and the *Hadith*, the greatest duty of the Muslim community is to spread the divine message of Islam peacefully among other nations. But because of their extremist political approach, present-day Muslims have abandoned this missionary duty. The most dangerous aspect of their forsaking this duty is their labelling of non-missionary activities as missionary work. For instance, debates, political protests, Muslim-reform activities, community work, are all termed missionary work by today's Muslims.

The most urgent task today is to inculcate this consciousness of the divine mission and to set up an educational system on the principles of this mission. Muslims should be raised as a missionary group or witnesses (22: 78)—as it is called in the Quran—and should be prevented from indulging in non-missionary activities. Without taking such a step, missionary work cannot be effectively performed.

The Quran (5: 67) tells us that the secret of protection from others' plots lies in the performance of *dawah* (communication of the message of God). That is, if Muslims engage in *dawah* work, their lives, properties and wealth will be protected by God. In short, the communication of the religious message is the responsibility of Muslims, while the protection of their worldly interests rests with God.

***Ghulu, or extremism, is invariably relevant to externals and not to internal realities.***

According to a famous tradition, 'our actions are judged by our intentions'. Intention here is the equivalent of what is generally called spirit. This means that although there are many actions which in form appear to be morally acceptable, it is to the spirit of these acts rather than their external form that Islam attaches real importance.

From a *Hadith* we learn that Prophet Muhammad, speaking of the Muslims of the future predicted that only the external form of Islamic actions would survive. That is to say, the actions of the Muslims of the future would be lacking in internal spirit and only the outer form of their religious observances would persist. People will remain ignorant of the true spirit of Islam so long as they are conversant only with its forms and attach importance only to the externals.

It is easy to understand how extremism or *ghulu*, stems from this flawed perception. In the early days of Islam, the spirit was alive, and was accorded full attention. But when degeneration set in amongst the later generations, external rituals began to be given more importance. This is a frequent occurrence.

This can be explained better with an example from the world of business. The phrase 'customer friendly behaviour' is often used in business jargon. It means if a businessman is to be successful, he must appear to be friendly to his customers. Now let us compare this with behaviour in the family. You will not hear any parents say that their behaviour towards their children is 'child friendly'. The reason for this difference is that the spirit of love for their children wells up naturally in parents, and so they do not need to talk about it nor make a display of it.

***The greatest duty of the Muslim community is to spread the divine message of Islam peacefully among other nations.***

The case of a businessman is totally different. A businessman has no love or compassion for his customers. It is solely the desire for commercial gain that inspires him to make a display of these qualities. It is human nature that wherever the internal spirit is alive, no importance will be attached to the externals, while in the absence of spirit, maximum attention will be paid to formal etiquette.

This is the human mentality that produces the phenomenon called *ghulu*. It is a fact that *ghulu*, or extremism, is invariably relevant to externals and not to internal realities.

When we look at the Muslims of today we find that the prediction of the Prophet has come true. One kind of *ghulu* that has developed among Muslims is the one pertaining to ideology, for instance, the concept of spiritual leaders being intermediaries between God and man, and the concept of sacredness of graves.

Today violent activities are going on in the name of *jihad* all over the world. There are some who are directly involved, while others justify these acts in their speeches and writings. A third group consists of those who are silent. But according to the *Shariah* principle, they too are involved, for silence is not enough; it is their duty to publicly condemn such un-Islamic acts.

This political *ghulu* is the greatest weakness of Muslims; it has overridden all the human qualities that qualify a community for a position of honour

and glory—qualities such as benevolence, universality of approach (that is looking at all human beings as God’s family), positive thinking, keeping abreast of changing times, realistic thinking, acknowledgement of others, fostering the *dawah* spirit, giving importance to the value of peace and objective thinking.

The greatest harm done by political extremism is that it deters Muslims from emerging from the shell of the past. This is the cause of their failure to understand the present. In the past, war was something which decided the fate of communities. But in modern times, peaceful resources have become much more powerful. Yet, Muslims seem to be unaware of these resources. In the past, economy was based on agriculture. Now it is based on industry. Electronic communications just did not exist in the past, whereas today, communications have become one of the greatest strengths of mankind. But Muslims are blissfully unaware of all these developments. That is why they have not been able to take advantage of the blessings of the modern age. Moreover in the past, all resources were in the hands of the king, but today is the age of institutions. It has become possible in modern times for any community which so desires to build up a parallel empire by establishing institutions.

The violent *jihad*, prevalent in modern times, dates back to 1799. There has been a 200-year-long *jihad* without any positive result, and with no real movement directed as yet at reassessment of values, aims or objectives. The reason lies in the Muslims’ lack of awareness. Today, the greatest task is to remedy this shortcoming, without which there is no possibility of any positive change.

***The communication of the religious message is the responsibility of Muslims, while the protection of their worldly interests rests with God.***

About seventy years ago, a book was published titled *Our Decline: Its Causes and Remedies*. The author concluded that the reason for Muslim backwardness lay in abandoning *jihad*. He quoted an Arabic couplet in support:

“I refrained from taking part in war, so that I might live. But I did not find in it life. Life was for those who went ahead and waged the war.”

This point has been made repeatedly by Muslim leaders over the last two centuries. The result has been that this militant ideology has spread among Muslims all over the world. The *Jihadi* model has become the

sole inspiration for action. But when we take stock of the outcome, we find that this has proved to be counter-productive. In such a situation, it would be more appropriate to modify the couplet and say:

“I adopted the path of war for life and survival, but finally I learnt that life and survival are only for those who abandon the militant course of action.” ❑



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# WE BELONG TO GOD

*And We Shall Return to Him*

**I**T often happens in this world that man loses something, or suffers some calamity. On such occasions, Islam teaches us to willingly resign ourselves to our misfortune, taking that to be God's decree. On all such occasions the sufferer should utter the words: *Inna Lillah...* 'We belong to God and we shall return to Him.'

God has made this world for the purpose of putting mankind to the test. Here, receiving and losing are both designed as a trial for man. Therefore, when man receives something, he should prove himself to be a thankful servant of God. And when he loses something he should adopt the attitude of patience. Only one who can do so will pass God's test.

In this world man cannot save himself from experiencing unpleasant things. Sometimes he will suffer from the pangs of hunger and thirst, at others, a life very dear to him will pass away or he will incur a loss of wealth. On all such occasions these words must come to his lips...'We belong to God and we shall all return to Him.'

*O God, You are the giver. If You have taken something out of what You have given me, You had the right to do so.*

Through these words man acknowledges his status of servitude vis à vis God's all-powerfulness. He expresses himself in words such as these: 'O God, You are the giver. If You have taken something out of what You have given me, You had the right to do so.'

Saying *Inna Lillah* is a form of worship. This is to adopt the attitude of surrendering to God's will instead of complaining against fate. It is to convert the loss into a new discovery.

This phrase, 'We are from God and to God we shall return' is in short, an acknowledgement of God's godhead on the part of His servants. □



## ***Right Use of Reason***

*If you use your reason with sincerity and modesty, reason will serve as a constructive and healthy agent of your personality.*

# FROM THE SPIRITUAL TREE

*There is a tree beside my house. I call it the 'Spiritual Tree'. I derive spiritual inspiration from it. A tree is an ever-growing being that was initially a seed possessing the potential of becoming a full-grown tree. A seed takes food from the universe around it and then grows into a tree. The same is true with spirituality, the desire for which is intrinsic to, and an integral part of, the very nature of, every human being. To realize this spirituality, Man must derive spiritual food from the universe around him. A tree converts carbon-dioxide into oxygen; a spiritual person is one who can take positive lessons from negative situations. From this perspective, a tree is an embodiment of a spiritual personality. —Maulana Wahiduddin Khan*



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## MAN'S HELPLESSNESS

**I**N his book *The Mysterious Universe*, the British scientist Sir James Jeans elaborating on man and the universe, writes: 'It appears that man has strayed into a world which was not made for him.'

But it would be truer to say that:

It appears that man has strayed into a world which was not made by him, and nor is he its controller.

Man's predicament is very strange. We know ourselves to be living beings. But this existence is a gift. We have not brought ourselves into existence.

***Man must acknowledge that in this world he is only a 'taker' and secondly that there is another Being who is only a 'giver'.***

We want that we should have a healthy body, which is essential in order to live well. But a healthy body is not in our hands. We need all those many things that form part of what is called the 'life support system'. We can lead a successful life only with this support system. But it is not in our power to establish this system.



We need a favourable climate in order to live in peace and comfort. But we do not have the power to establish and maintain such a climate. Man desires eternal life, but everyone who comes into this world dies at an appointed time. It is beyond our capacity to stave off death.

Man is a completely indigent being. But in order to fulfil his many needs he is dependent on an external power. This aspect of man's life is an extremely serious matter requiring complete deliberation. It is these contradictory aspects of his life that compel him to seriously ponder and discover the truth of this matter so that he can plan and construct his life accordingly.

Experience shows man that in this world he is only a 'taker' and secondly that there is another Being Who is only a 'giver'. This relationship obliges man to ponder about the truth behind his existence and then fashion his life based on this reality. He should place himself in the position based on reality and acknowledge the deserving position that he must accord to the 'giver'.

In other words, were man to seriously ponder about himself, he will discover himself to be in the position of a devotee and the other Being in the position of Almighty God. This discovery is the true secret of man's success. That person who using his intellectual capabilities can discover this truth is truly human. For him are reserved all eternal success. On the other hand, that person who fails to discover this truth will have nothing but eternal loss.

That person who discovers this reality will naturally respond in a manner stated in the Quran as, 'All praise [and thanks] is to God, the Lord of the universe. (1: 1-2)

He will thank the one who can satisfy all requirements. This acknowledgement will revolutionize man so that he will develop an extreme form of devotion to God and fear of God. This is the man that is referred to in the Quran as a *momin* or a 'believer'. □

***Were man to seriously ponder about himself, he will discover himself to be in the position of a devotee and the other Being in the position of Almighty God. This discovery is the true secret of man's success.***



# CREATIVE SOLUTION

## *Objective Thinking*

**C**REATIVE SOLUTION, a popular buzzword means rethinking issues that need solutions and searching for new answers. A creative solution provides a fresh perspective to a challenging problem.

A creative solution is a general principle of nature. It is as much relevant to the secular domain as it is to the religious sphere. It is something fully desirable as far as Islam is concerned. What is called *ijtihad* in Islam is precisely this principle. Whether it be in the religious or the secular sphere, people repeatedly face the need to rethink certain issues with an open mind, to rise above prejudices and seek new and effective solutions for them.

***A person with a creative mind is someone who is free of prejudices, someone who can think objectively about issues and with a completely open mind.***

A person with a creative mind is someone who is free of prejudices, someone who can think objectively about issues and with a completely open mind. Such a person can arrive at creative solutions to problems.

A prejudiced mind is a veil that prevents one from developing creativity. Freeing oneself from prejudices leads to opening of the mind.

The person who thinks with an open mind and keeps the real nature alive in every circumstance will find that his mind discovers practicable solutions to even the most difficult problems and situations. □



## ***Waves of Life***

*Life in this world is like a vast ocean, always full of waves. The only sensible way to deal with the waves that appear in our lives is to know how to ride them rather than complain against them.*

# SOUND SPEECH

## *The Language of Paradise*

**T**HE Quran greatly emphasises on sound speech or straight speech. This is very important in social life. In the chapter *The Confederates* the Quran gives its guidance in this regard in the following words:

Believers fear God, and say the straight speech. He will make your conduct sound and forgive you your sins. Whoever obeys God and His Messenger has indeed achieved a great success.

(33: 70-71)

The fear of God is not a simple matter. Fear of God makes one highly sincere, responsible and honest. It is these qualities that makes one able to speak in a sound manner. And there is no doubt about it that sound speech coming from sound thinking has the greatest importance in terms of building a good character and a better society.

Sound thinking leads to sound speech. Sound speech is one in which there is no confusion and which is based on facts. Sound thinking inculcates realistic thinking and it is realistic approach that leads to all kinds of success.

Sound speech or sound writing is easily understandable. It addresses people's mind, it touches their hearts. A sound thinker always speaks in the language of nature and nature is common to both the speaker and the listener. It is this commonality that makes speaking and writing of a sound thinker acceptable to all.

***Fear of God makes one highly sincere, responsible and honest. It is these qualities that makes one able to speak in a sound manner.***

Sound thinking is always based on reason; sound thinking is a result of awakening one's mind; it is an outcome of deep contemplation; it is free of all kinds of bias and prejudice. Due to this quality such speech and writing directly reaches the hearts of the people. It has the power to change people's character. It may revolutionize people's mind. It is this quality that can bring about reform in society having the power to build a healthier nation.

Sound speech or sound writing represents the whole personality of a man. It is a sign of an integrated personality. It tells that the concerned person is an honest person. It means that what he is saying is not just

lip service but is his sincere opinion. He is free of hypocrisy. There is no difference between his thinking and his speaking.

A person having these qualities is a great asset for his society. His sound thinking is a guarantee that he will not create problems for his fellow beings. He will live as trustworthy person. He will be free of the self-centred mentality. He will follow his conscience rather than his own interest. He will adopt a principled character. His sound thinking will make him sound in every aspect of life.

However, in any situation, if such a person were to—forgetting himself in the course of conversation—raise his voice in anger and argue with his companions unnecessarily, he will soon become conscious of his mistake. Ashamed of having gone to extremes he will turn to God for forgiveness. One example of the form of such supplication is in the following words of the Prophet:

***A sound thinker always speaks in the language of nature and nature is common to both the speaker and the listener.***

“Glory be to You, O Lord, and praise, I bear witness that there is no God save You. I seek Your forgiveness and turn to You in repentance”. Such a person will have all that passed in that meeting forgiven for him by God. (At Tirmidhi).

But it is not a mechanical recital of these words which will earn God’s forgiveness. This will happen only if one utters them in all earnestness and with a keen awareness of their meaning. The sentiments they convey must be endorsed both by heart and intellect. The Prophet was describing the action of a person who stands in fear of God; a person of sincerity.

According to the Quran, sound speech or right speech is divine speech; it is like speaking the language of Paradise. Paradise is the place where only right thinking persons will find entry, so the one who follows this principle, will get a double blessing of God. He becomes a good member of a society in this world and in the Hereafter, he will be accepted as a successful member of the society of Paradise. □



# THE TREASURE OF GOD REALIZATION

## *Wonders of the Universe*

**M**ENTIONING the “Words of God” (31: 27) the Quran tells us that these words of God are so numerous that their enumeration would never cease. What are these words of God? There is nothing cryptic about them. Rather these refer to the mysteries of the universe. Modern science, in its reality, is another name for discovering these words of God.

The history of modern science is spread over 500 years. During this period, scientists have discovered many things in accordance with natural or physical laws. The truth is that modern science in its nature, is the science of *Ma'rifat* (God-realization). It has opened a great treasure for the believers. Science has broadened the canvas of God-realization.

Here by science we mean popular science, and not technical science. On this subject, simple and easily understandable books are available in every language. The truth is that the greatest source of achieving *Ma'rifat* is contemplation of the creation of God. Supporting data is always required for contemplation. Before the developments of science, very limited data was available on this subject. Now science has provided a huge library of unlimited data for the seekers of *Ma'rifat*. It has become possible for such seekers to pursue their journey endlessly. At every moment they may receive the spiritual food of *Ma'rifat*. The process of spiritual development can go on within them continuously and never stop even for a single moment until the day they die. □

*Science has broadened the canvas of God-realization.*



## ***Feeling of Deprivation***

*Deprivation is not just a lack of something. Rather, it is, at the same time, also possession of something else—a strength and an incentive to overcome the sense of deficiency.*

# THE AGE OF ALTERNATIVES

## *The Peaceful Method*

**I**N ancient times, ambitious people had only one arena in which to fulfil their ambitions—the battlefield. But the modern age has seen a sea-change in this regard. Now we are living in the age of alternatives. There are many options other than engaging in battle.



For an ambitious person, a number of peaceful alternatives are available. Those gains that people expected only from war are now achievable, on a far greater scale, by availing of peaceful alternatives. To illustrate these points, here are two parallel examples.

The Mughal rule in India was a dynastic one. Aurangzeb (1618–1707) was the sixth ruler of this dynasty. He and his brother Dara Shikoh (1615–1659) had different agendas. At that time there was only one course available to settle the differences—that was battle. Therefore, a battle took place in which Dara Shikoh and his supporters were defeated and killed.

***Those gains that people expected only from war are now achievable, on a far greater scale, by availing of peaceful alternatives.***

In present times, there are two major political parties in India—the BJP and the Congress. These two parties have different agendas. Since India is a democratic country, both parties contest general elections to decide their fate and this principle works. Thus, in May 2014 in the wake of the general elections, the political leadership of India changed hands peacefully.

This alternative is available in every country, even in those countries in which some groups are engaged in violence. Every day we hear news of bloodshed in these countries. This state of affairs is due to our leaders' unawareness of how the times have changed. Those leaders who are engaged in violence in these countries are acting under the influence of an old mind-set. According to this mind-set, they are familiar only with the ancient model of kingship. They are unaware of the present democratic model. Although the result of this kind of violent struggle is terrible, the conditioning of the way of thinking of these leaders is so deep-rooted that they are unable to rethink their strategy. In recent times, several leaders have become victims of such violence, for example, Saddam Hussein (died 2006), Muammar Gaddafi (died 2011) and Abu Ala al-Afri (died 2015).

The coming of the age of alternatives is a very positive sign. It means that history is moving from war to peace. In the twenty-first century this age has reached its culmination. Now there is no need to opt for the gun or the bomb culture. Any person who wants to fulfil his ambitions must take cognizance of the spirit of the age. Before taking any action, he must ponder over the whole situation. If he possesses an objective mind, he will certainly come to grips with the fact that he has a better option in terms of the peaceful method.

One such example is modern Turkey. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Turkey was part of the Ottoman Empire, which comprised about thirty present-day countries. But during the First World War, the Ottoman Empire disintegrated and Turkey's political expansion was brought to an end.

However, in the wake of the dissolution of their empire, the leaders of modern Turkey took some drastic measures and searched for an alternative to political expansion—that is, the development of science and technology in their country. As a result of this, within a short period, Turkey emerged as the most developed country of the Muslim world.

Present-day Muslims are living in a political dichotomy, that is, in a condition in which there is the ruler and the ruled. They have found themselves reduced to the ruled category, which they find unacceptable. So they are trying to change this state of affairs and to bring themselves back into the ruler category.

*The coming of the age of alternatives is a positive sign. It means that history is moving from war to peace.*

But this dichotomous thinking is totally unrealistic. They are unaware of the fact that there exists a third option for them, of which they should avail. It is an option which is so great that, by exercising it, they can build a non-political empire for themselves.

The real problem is that present-day Muslims are ignorant of the fact that the present age is one of democracy. In this age, the government has been reduced to performing the role of administration. But, outside the administration, there are much bigger fields open to Muslims. For example, education, the press, the media, economics as well as *dawah* work, or conveying the message of God to people. Muslims would do well to abandon their political activism and dedicate themselves to the above non-political fields. Here, they can build independent universal empires, much greater than their former political empires.

It is a fact that in the present age there has been an an explosion of alternatives in every field. Be it man or woman, skilled or unskilled, political leaders or reformers; this principle successfully applies to everyone. Now there is no need for pessimism or to engage in protests, violence or fighting. Everyone can easily avail the alternatives and can achieve success in any walk of life.

***Muslims would do well to abandon their political activism and dedicate themselves to non-political fields.***

In the present age, the phrase 'armed struggle' may still appear in the dictionary, but it has no real meaning any more. Like other obsolete words, 'armed struggle' has also become obsolete. It is now a kind of anachronism to speak in terms of war and violence.

'Fighting' in the present world is an outdated concept. If the present fighters and militants were to become aware of this fact, they would surely throw away their weapons. Their weapons would only find a place in museums. □



### ***Right Response***

*Most of us blatantly ignore the innumerable wondrous bounties that God has blessed us with. At every moment we see or experience these bounties, but yet we never acknowledge, think about or reflect on them. We simply do not respond as we should.*



# SERVICE TO MANKIND

## *Social Service*

**A**LL the teachings of Islam are based on two basic principles—the worship of God and the service of mankind. Without putting both of these principles into practice, there can be no true fulfillment of one's religious duties.

In its followers, Islam inculcates the spirit of love and respect for all human beings. By serving human beings on the one hand they please God, and on the other they achieve spiritual progress for themselves.

According to a *Hadith*, you should be merciful to people on earth and God on high will be merciful to you. One can receive God's reward in the Hereafter only if one has done something to alleviate the sufferings of mankind. In this way Islam links personal salvation to serving others. This desire to serving others should not be accompanied by any expectations in return.

Coming to the assistance of others is, in essence, an acknowledgement of the blessings which God has showered upon man. It is that person, who helps others who has something more than others. For example, one who has eyes comes to the assistance of one who has not been blessed with the precious gift of sight, an able bodied person will give physical help to the disabled and the man with resources will come to the aid of one who lacks them.

***All the teachings of Islam are based on two basic principles—worship of God and service of mankind.***

On all such occasions when one man helps out another by virtue of those blessings which God has given him, he is in fact showing his gratitude to God for these favours. He is saying within himself, 'O God, whatever I have is all given by You. Now I am spending it in Your path, I pray for more blessings and mercy for both of us (the helper and the receiver)'.

Helping another is actually raising one's own moral status. Making use of one's possessions only for oneself is to live on the plane of animals, for the beasts share nothing with others. Man, superior to all creatures, lives on a far higher plane. The proper attitude in accordance with his status is not to keep to himself but to embrace the whole of humanity. He should lead his life as a well-wisher to all, a 'giver' member of society, ready to help everyone by accepting others' rights over his own

possessions. Social work in other words, is service to humanity. And after the worship of God, no task is nobler.

According to another *Hadith*, on Judgement day, God will say to a person, "I was ill, but you did not come to nurse Me." The man will reply, "God, You being the Lord of the universe, how can You be ill? God will answer, such and such servant of Mine was ill. Had you gone there, you would have found Me there with him. Then God will say to another person, "I was hungry but you did not feed Me." The person will reply, "God, You are the Lord of the worlds, how could You go hungry?" God will say, such and such of My servant came to you, but you did not feed him. Had you done, so, you would have found Me with him. Then God will say to yet another man, "I was thirsty, and you did not give Me water to drink." That person will also say, "God, You are the Lord of the worlds, how could You be thirsty?" God will say, such and such servant of Mine came to you, but you did not give him water to drink. Had you offered him water, you would have found Me there with him.

From this, we learn the Islamic principle that if someone wants to find God, he shall first have to make himself deserving of this by helping the poor and the needy. This act becomes a means of spiritual progress for him. And there is no doubt that it is only those people who have elevated themselves spiritually, who will find God.

***Social work in other words, is service to humanity. And after the worship of God, no task is nobler.***

This culture of mercy and compassion approved of by God is not limited to human beings, but extends also to the animal world. We must be equally sympathetic to animals.

The *Hadith* gives us many guidelines on how to look after animals and treat them with fairness, there being duties to them laid down by God. One who is cruel to animals risks depriving himself of God's mercy.

Islamic belief softens the hearts of its believers. That is why, when Islamic belief penetrates people's hearts, they will of necessity become kind and compassionate to others. They will see everyone with eyes of love and compassion. They will have this urge within them to serve others and fulfill others' needs.

If, even after adopting the beliefs of Islam, feelings of love and compassion do not well up in the heart of its adherent, he should rethink whether or not Islamic beliefs have truly found a place in his heart and mind, whether he is able to practice fully what he believes

and whether he has succeeded in moulding himself entirely on the model of Islam.

When Umar Faruq, the second Caliph of Islam, travelled from Madinah to Palestine, he had taken only one camel along with him. He thought, if he continued to ride the camel during the entire journey, it would be cruelty to the animal, so it must be given rest. Therefore, he rode and walked by turns so that the camel should have periods of rest, until he reached his destination.

*It is only in serving people that we shall have a share in God's mercy.*

This shows that if the true spirit of Islam is inculcated in a person, he becomes so compassionate to all living beings, that, even at the cost of his own comforts, he extends a helping hand to others. According to a *Hadith*, "By God, he is not a Muslim who eats his fill, while his neighbour goes hungry." This shows that a Muslim is one who is concerned with others' hunger and thirst as he is with his own; who is concerned not only with his own person but with the whole of humanity.

According to another *Hadith*, you should, "extend greetings to people, feed them and earn your place in heaven." This shows that according to Islam that person is worthy of heaven whose heart is eager for others' peace and well-being, who is eager to share with everyone, whether it be food, clothes or medical help, etc. In short, one should share in people's pain and suffering.

Islam is a religion of humanity. Islam considers serving others as a great act of worship. According to the teachings of Islam, it is only in serving people that we shall have a share in God's mercy. □



## ***Intellectual Development***

*Healthy differences, inviting discussion and dialogue and intellectual exchange, lead to intellectual development, while a 'no difference' situation leads to intellectual stagnation.*

# SALVATION

## *Eternal Blessings of God*

**W**HAT is the greatest issue facing man in this world? It is how to secure salvation in the life after death so that he may find his true abode and have a share in God's eternal blessings.

Every man who is born in this present world has to enter another world after death. In this world man has been granted life's opportunities as a matter of test. Whatever man receives in the next world will be purely on the basis of his deeds in this world. This means that in the world before death, man has been given a great number of things and opportunities, whether or not he deserved them. But after death, the criterion of receiving will only be a matter of his just desserts; nothing will be given to him as trial.

Those who are held to be deserving will be granted from God's blessings exactly what they actually merited. But those who have done nothing to deserve God's blessings will have nothing whatsoever in store for them. They will be compelled to live in a state of utter deprivation.

***The present world is the place for action, while the next world is the place for reaping the reward for one's deeds.***

To ensure that one is not deprived of God's blessings one has to work hard for one's life in the next world. Salvation would elude the one who fails in this matter. The next world is the perfect and eternal world. There are all kinds of pleasures and happiness in store for mankind. It is that world which man should cherish most, and it should be the place to which he most earnestly aspires. But the time for action to secure a place in that blessed world is not the world after death, but the

world before death. The present world is the place for action, while the next world is the place for reaping the reward for one's deeds.

Salvation in the life Hereafter is only for those who prove themselves deserving of it. □



# UNENDING WAR

## *Needless Suffering*

**W**AR on its own is an act which, once initiated, can never be brought to an end. If active war is discontinued, passive war takes its place.



In actual fact there are always two sides in a war: one winner and one loser. Either way, this does not bring about the end of war, for the victor becomes arrogant, as a result of which he overestimates himself. After the victory the winner's ambitions become very high. He now wants more and more success. This way of thinking perpetuates war, which then manifests itself in a number of destructive ways.

As for the loser, the psychology of defeat is such that one who is defeated is not ready to accept defeat, nor does he want to face another defeat. Failing to avenge his defeat is for him as bad as a second defeat. This is why the loser never accepts defeat. He wants to avenge his defeat, come what may.

For the smooth functioning of life, it is essential to put an end to the state of war. But history tells us that the will to end a warlike situation is produced neither in the victor nor the loser. This role has to be performed by a third party. With the intervention of a third party, there is always the possibility that the situation of war may be brought to an end.

***For the smooth functioning of life, it is essential to put an end to the state of war.***

We find an example of this when, in 1945 during the final stages of the Second World War, the United States dropped atom bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan felt an intense need to exact revenge for this most heinous crime carried out against the nation and in the process to teach America a lesson.

In those crucial times certain wise journalists and writers of Japan started a campaign in the country. They wrote powerful articles and books to pacify the Japanese people. They put forward the argument that if America had bombed their cities in 1945, they too had prior to this destroyed the United States' naval base at Pearl Harbour in 1941, and thus the scores had been settled. They further urged the people of their country to give up the path of revenge and to strive to

build the nation anew. The Japanese paid heed to this wise advice and abandoned their desire for revenge. Instead they adopted the path of cooperation with America. The result was soon there for all to see: Japan emerged as a highly developed country despite the destruction it had experienced during World War II.

The same situation prevailed between India and Pakistan. Pakistan was formed in 1947. From that time onwards rivalry between the two countries continued unabated. And then in 1971, India militarily joined the freedom movement of Bangladesh under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920–1975). As a result, Pakistan was subsequently partitioned. Several books were written on this issue, notably *Partition after Partition* and *The Dismemberment of Pakistan*.

This event generated great anger among the Pakistanis. During these delicate times, what was needed was for some wise thinkers to rise to the occasion and strive to pacify the Pakistani people. They should have made the Pakistanis realize that they had been instrumental in partitioning India in 1947 and that now India had helped to bring about the partitioning of their country in 1971. Thus, the scores were

settled. It was now time to forget the past and build their nation along positive lines. However, no such thinker of Pakistan rose to the occasion. Consequently, Pakistan's hatred for India continued. It is for this reason that it has been involved in many negative activities against India. The result of these military engagements is that Pakistan has turned into a failed state.

***This cycle of violence often does not end until both sides, in the process, completely annihilate each other, which is hardly the optimal way to end hostilities.***

It often happens among nations that war and violence break out. At such times, the groups at war are not able to turn their negative

thinking into positive thinking by themselves. They cannot on their own abandon the path of violence in favour of the path of peace. What is needed at that time is that a third-party should work to cool down their feelings of animosity and try to develop positive thinking in them. If there were people who could play such a role, then those at war could be brought back to the path of peace. But if no such attempt is made, then violence between the two groups goes on endlessly. This cycle of violence often does not end until both sides, in the process, completely annihilate each other, which is hardly the optimal way to end hostilities. □

# INCREASING IN FAITH

*Discover God*

'OBSERVING nature is my religion', a scientist once reflected. "If any day I don't discover something new in nature, I feel that the day has been wasted." If this is the state of one who is absorbed in God's creation, then how can the state of one who is absorbed in the Creator Himself be any different? Just as the scientist discovers something new in the world of creation every day, so a believer should always be making new discoveries about his Creator—discoveries that increase him in faith. Any day that he does not find something new is like a day that has been wasted; it is as if he has not established contact with God on that day.

Faith is another word for discovery of God. God is a never-ending reality; He has no limit. So discovery of Him is also a never-ending event. Faith that does not grow is not really faith at all; it is just a manner of neglecting God.

If one's mind is constantly directed towards God, then one will repeatedly experience new manifestations of His glory; time and again a new divine light will shine on him. Just as God's virtues are interminable, so a believer's search for knowledge of God is a journey that never comes to an end.

This fresh knowledge is sometimes expressed in the form of divine states with which one was hitherto unacquainted. Sometimes it surges to one's lips in the form of words of supplication which one had never conceived before. Sometimes a previously concealed secret of God's wisdom becomes apparent to one. Sometimes one attains hitherto unknown degrees of proximity to God. Sometimes profound new understanding of truths is inspired within one, which all the words one knows are inadequate to express. □

*Just as the scientist discovers something new in the world of creation every day, so a believer should always be making new discoveries about his Creator—discoveries that increase him in faith.*



# UNIVERSAL MESSAGE FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

*The Quran*

**A** STUDY of the Quran shows that the Quranic teachings are based on realistic approach. When we use the term “realistic approach” to describe a way of thinking, it always means, thinking that is in accordance with reality. One with such a bent of mind will be scientific in all his dealings in the world. His thinking will be totally in accordance with external realities.

According to traditions, the Prophet of Islam used to pray:

“O God, show us the truth in the form of truth and grant us the wisdom to follow it, and show us falsehood as falsehood and grant us the strength to keep ourselves away from it. Show us things as they are.”

This prayer of the Prophet of Islam is a fine example of the scientific approach. The Quran wants to inculcate this spirit in every believer. When a believer becomes eager to be granted this spirit to guide his thoughts, he begins praying for it.

On a number of occasions we find this teaching expressed in different ways in the Quran. The Quran enjoins believers to ‘fear God and speak the truth. He will bless your works and forgive you your sins’. He who obeys God and His apostle shall win a greater victory. (33: 70-71)

***The Quran is not a book of science in the technical sense, but there is no denying the truth that the Quranic approach is nothing other than a scientific approach.***

This Quranic verse commands mankind to say what is fair. The words ‘*qaul-e-sadeed*’ means saying the truth in accordance with the facts. Just as the arrow reaches its target by being shot in precisely the right direction, similarly *qaul-e-sadeed* hits the mark by making one’s words correspond in every detail with reality.

There are two kinds of human utterances: realistic and un-realistic. Realistic utterances are those that tally exactly with reality. Conversely, un-realistic utterances are those that do not take the actual state of affairs into account and are based on suppositions, conjectures, or mere opinion, rather than on fact. God approves of only the former types of utterances.



There are a number of verses in the Quran that aim at inculcating this scientific spirit in the believers. In all matters believers are to be guided by reason and logical thinking.

According to the Quran, there are two kinds of thinking—sincere thinking and insincere thinking or double-standard thinking. The scientific approach is characteristic of a sincere thinker. A sincere thinker cannot envision an approach which is not based on realism. He bases his life on sound and true foundations. On the contrary, it is the insincere thinker who has no principles or scruples. His approach is based on opportunism and he changes his point of view and way of thinking to serve his own interests. That is why there is not even a grain of the scientific approach in him. His thoughts and deeds are totally unpredictable.

A sincere person with a scientific approach of looking at the world, is the one who comes up to the standard set by the Quran. At the same time, the insincere person is completely unaffected by and in fact free of scientific approach. Therefore, he fails in life's test as he is so obsessed with his ego-centric thinking that he refuses to adopt a realistic approach.

***The Quran cites the Prophet of Islam as a messenger sent for all mankind and not just for the Arabs.***

The Quran is not a book of science in the technical sense, but there is no denying the truth that the Quranic approach is nothing other than a scientific approach.

A study of the Quran also shows that its aim is to produce a universal approach in human beings. Universality means high thinking and an unbiased and unconditional approach. We find an example of this quality in the Quran. It addresses us thus: "O man, O mankind." This shows that the approach of the Quran is based on universality. The very first chapter of the Quran begins with these words. "Praise be to God, the Lord and Sustainer of all mankind. Similarly, the Quran introduces God as the "Lord of the Worlds", and not just the Lord of the Muslims or the Lord of the Arabs. He is also called 'the Lord of the East and the West' (70: 40).

The Quran cites the Prophet of Islam as a messenger sent for all mankind and not just for the Arabs. The Quran says: "We have sent you as a mercy to mankind." (21: 107).

This universality of Quranic revelation brings about a universal approach in its believers. In another place Quran says: "Blessed be He

Who has revealed *Al-Furqan* (the Criterion) to His servant, so that He may be a warner to all mankind." (25: 1).

The universal approach can be seen in all the teachings of Islam. For instance, at the end of *salat* the faithful turn their heads towards the right and left and utter these words of greeting: "*Assalam-o-Alaikum wa rahmatullah*" which mean: "May peace and blessings be upon you". This is meant for all mankind inhabiting the lands towards the east and the west, the north and the south. This is in fact a universal greeting.

In this way one of the aims of *salat* is to instil in believers feelings of well-wishing for the whole world. The whole world should share in one's prayers. This is a lesson in universal thinking, which is given daily to the believers. Similarly Hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam takes the form of a universal gathering. Muslims belonging to all the nations of the world meet one another on this occasion. It is in fact an annual attempt to produce universality in believers.

Conveying this universal divine and peaceful message to all the nations of the world is another important teaching of the Prophet. As a requirement of Islam this turns every believer into a universal ambassador for this activity. Coming out of the limited sphere of

***Conveying the universal divine and peaceful message to all the nations of the world is an important teaching of the Prophet.***

oneself, one is made to think at the level of all humanity. As a result, an activity like that of *Dawah* produces universal thinking among the faithful. The responsibility of *Dawah* takes the believer out of the local sphere and turns him into a global personality.

The truth is that universality is an inseparable part of Quranic thinking. One who adopts the Quranic way will start thinking at the universal level. His personality will be linked with the entire human brotherhood. In spite of being

located in a particular region, he becomes a citizen of the universe as far as his thinking is concerned. In this respect, it can rightly be said that Islam or the Quran promotes universal citizenship. □



## **Learn**

*Read even if you cannot read,  
learn even if you cannot learn.*

# THE WORD OF GOD

*From The Scriptures*

**T**HE Quran is the book of God. It has been preserved in its entirety since its revelation to the Prophet of Islam between 610 and 632 A.D. It is a book that brings glad tidings to mankind, along with divine admonition, and stresses the importance of man's discovery of the Truth on a spiritual and intellectual level.

Translated from Arabic and commentary  
by **Maulana Wahiduddin Khan**

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***He brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living. He gives life to the earth after its death, and you shall be raised to life in the same way. One of His signs is that He created you from dust and, behold, you became human beings and multiplied yourselves throughout the earth. Another of His signs is that He created for you from among yourselves spouses, so that you might find repose in them, and He created between you affection and kindness. Truly there are signs in this for people who reflect.*** (30: 19-21)

A wonderful miracle of the present world is growth and development. Here, one finds an inert, non-growing material turning into a material which is capable of growing and increasing. Here, lifeless earth, in other words, earth's elements, undergo a change and take the shape of moving and talking human beings. On account of this, human civilisation has survived for thousands of years now. This change, and that too a well-organised, proportionate and harmonious change, would not be at all possible unless it were the work of an all-powerful God.

The fact is that if a man gives deep consideration to God's creations, he will feel that the presence of God is reflected in everything.

***Another of His signs is that He created the heavens and earth, and the diversity of your languages and colours. There truly are signs in this for those who know. Among His signs are your sleep, at night or in daytime, and your seeking His bounty. There truly are signs in this for people who hear. Among His signs is this: He shows you the lightning, giving rise to [both] fear and hope, and sends down water from the sky, giving life thereby to the earth after it had been lifeless: in this, behold, there are signs indeed for people who use their reason!*** (30: 22-24)

The universe in all the elements of its existence is the sign of God. It's coming into existence from nothingness and the enormous variety found in it indicates His vast powers. The utmost meaningfulness in all things reflects His quality of mercy. The existence of destructive things like lightning acquaints us with how God takes punitive actions. The revival of greenery on earth after being dry and barren demonstrates re-creation and resurrection.

All these are the signs of God. But these signs are only for those who lend their ears to the silent call of the universe—for those who put their wisdom and their knowledge to the correct use.

***Another of His signs is this: the heavens and the earth stand firm by His command and afterwards when He calls you, behold, from the earth you will come forth. All those in the heavens and on the earth belong to Him. All are obedient to Him.***

***He is the One who originates creation, then repeats it, and it is very easy for Him. His is the most exalted state in the heavens and on the earth; He is the Mighty, the Wise One.*** (30: 25-27)

In the vastness of space, the earth, the sun, the planets and stars—all wonderfully rare phenomena—proclaim by their very existence that there exists a Maintainer at whose behest, they continue to function. If this Being were taken away from the cosmos even for a moment, the whole system would be scattered helter-skelter. In this world, even an ordinary aeroplane will be destroyed if the pilot loses control. Then, how can the huge system of the universe be run without the control of a Controller?

Given the Great Power exhibited in the universe by its Creator, it appears an easy task for Him to re-create or resurrect man after his death. In the light of the feat of the first creation, which is being performed in the universe at every moment, to accept the possibility of the second creation is just like accepting a proven fact. In the universe, God's powers and His wisdom find expression at such a high level that attributing any remarkable feat to God on this basis is in no way a remote possibility.

***He sets forth for you an example taken from your own lives. Do you make your servants full partners with an equal share in the wealth We have bestowed upon you? Do you fear them as you fear each other? In this way We explain the signs to people who use their reason. And still those who are unjust follow their own desires without having any***

**knowledge. Then who can guide those whom God has let go astray? There shall be none to help them.** (30: 28-29)

If there is common property, all those who share it have a right to it, and every partner has to think of the other partners. But, God's position is not of this kind. God alone is the Lord of the entire universe. The relation between God and His creatures is the same as that between master and servant on a larger scale, and not that of those who share the property. Nobody gives his servant a status equal to that of himself. Similarly there is no one in the entire universe who enjoys a status equal to that of God. Lordship is for God, while for all other creatures there is only subjection. Apart from this, any other equation propounded will be based only on supposition and not on any real ground. □



### **Healthy Society**

*A healthy or well-wishing society is one where every member of the society is free of hatred for others, and is able to remain detached from the bad experiences which are the faults of others.*

### **Pre-death Period**

*All of us have only a limited period of time in this world. And, after that, our period is up. We won't ever be able to get back the time that has passed by. So, we need to clearly distinguish between proper and improper use of time.*

# ASK MAULANA

*Your Questions Answered*

***Maulana Wahiduddin Khan in a discussion on the necessity of dialogue and working for peace***

***When did you begin your mission, and what is it about?***

It's been a very long journey. It started many years ago, but it began in an active sense in 1967, when I became the editor of the Urdu weekly *Al-Jamiat*. Then, in 1970, I set up the Islamic Centre in New Delhi, and launched the Urdu monthly *Al-Risala* in 1976. In 2001, I set up the Centre for Peace and Spirituality. This, in brief, is a description of my organisational activities.

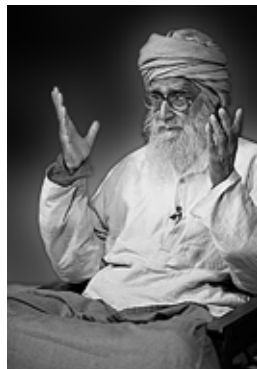
My mission is basically a *dawah* mission. *Dawah* means 'invitation', and this mission seeks to invite people to God. Through this mission, we seek to convey the word of God to people everywhere.

At the same time, I am also interested in working for peace. Without peace, you can't engage in positive or constructive work. If you want to do *dawah* work, if you want to promote spirituality, you need peace. So, we give great stress on working for peace, because our purpose is *dawah*, and *dawah* is not possible without peace. *Dawah* and peace are interlinked. I am thus interested in promoting both *dawah* and peace.

***There's much talk today about interfaith dialogue. It seems to be a relatively new thing. Why do you think people are talking about it today?***

It isn't that dialogue between followers of different faiths did not take place earlier. Yet, maybe not much of it took place in the formal sense, because for dialogue you need communications to relate, to dialogue with others, and in the past, means of communication were limited. Today, communications are highly advanced, and so not only is dialogue much more possible but it is also a pressing need.

I think interaction and intellectual exchange between people of different faiths is very important. We are really blessed to find ourselves in a period of history where the possibilities of such exchange and interaction abound. These possibilities were very limited in earlier times, and so we are truly fortunate.



### **What are your views on coexistence, peace, tolerance and the ethics of dialogue?**

These values are universal, and are all very good. Without peace, without peaceful coexistence and tolerance, you can't do anything positive. Islam stresses upon these values.

### **What is the Islamic approach to coexistence, to dialogue between people of different faiths?**

The Quran says *as-sulh khair*, which means 'reconciliation is best'. According to Islam, our choice should be peace, rather than confrontation. This is reflected very clearly in the teachings of the Sufis. The Sufis believed in what is called *sulh-e kul* or peace with all.

Peace with all is a fundamental Islamic teaching. Why?

This is because *dawah* is a central concern of Islam. *Dawah* cannot be effectively engaged in without peace, without peaceful interaction with others. Islam is a religion of mission. It has a mission—which is to convey the word of God everywhere. This was the Prophet's mission. It is the duty of believers in Islam to explain to people the Creation Plan of God, to convey to them God's message to humanity. This is our mission. This mission requires peace. It also requires interaction and dialogue with others.

### **What do you think Muslims might gain from such dialogue?**

As I said, dialogue is necessary for *dawah*, and *dawah* is a basic duty and mission of followers of Islam. I do not think there is any negative point in dialogue at all, provided it is serious discussion and intellectual exchange, not polemics or debate. When you dialogue and interact with others, you exchange thoughts and views. If the other party accepts your position or views, you gain a companion. And if the other party does not accept your view, if it is not convinced about it, at least you gain valuable experience in terms of intellectual exchange. So, either way you stand to gain from dialogue and interaction.

Peaceful dialogue, then, is very good and useful in all circumstances. I have personally experienced that interaction and dialogue between people of different faiths and backgrounds are always useful for Muslims (and for others, too)—in terms of intellectual development or in terms of conveying the message of Islam to others.

There's an important point I need to add here. I have participated in several interfaith dialogue initiatives, in India and abroad. But according to my experience, these efforts were not very beneficial. It

was not because dialogue is itself not beneficial. Dialogue is always good. The reason that these dialogue initiatives were not very beneficial is that I think Muslims are not very familiar with the process of dialogue. Muslims only know how to debate, not dialogue. And so, I found that while the other participants were sincerely engaged in trying to promote dialogue, the Muslims who were present were not sincere about it, because they only knew how to debate. Always, I have noticed, Muslims use the language of debate. In this regard, I would say that there is an urgent need to bring about reform in Muslim thinking. We have to convince Muslims to drop the debate method and opt for scientific, peaceful, meaningful and positive dialogue.

But in spite of what is happening I am hopeful, that through such dialogue initiatives, Muslims may gain some useful and valuable experiences. Although they are not very competent to engage in dialogue, each one of them who has the good fortune of being able to participate in a dialogue will be exposed to some new learning experiences, which may help him reform himself, his thinking, his attitude to others and his behaviour.

So, I am greatly in favour of interfaith dialogue, and think that it is a wonderful thing for Muslims, as well as, of course, for everyone else.

***What productive insights have you gained in your many years of engagement in dialogue?***

I must say that these dialogues resulted in no breakthrough, but personally I learnt many things through dialoguing with others.

Let me cite an instance. In one of the meetings most of the participants were Hindus. Some of them spoke in a negative language. For instance, they spoke against the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. They had many complaints against him.

But I explained to them, "Aurangzeb was not a representative of Islam. I'm here as a representative of Islam, not as a representative of Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb was a member of the Mughal dynasty. And Mughal rule wasn't Islamic rule. It wasn't even Muslim rule. It was simply the rule of a certain Muslim dynasty."

In this way, I detached Aurangzeb from Islam, and I spoke at length on Islam. This was appreciated by many people in the audience. They were very interested in what I was saying.

This is the path of wisdom, the wise approach to dialoguing and relating with others. In dialogue meetings, I often find Muslims trying



to advocate or defend Aurangzeb and other Muslim rulers. This fails to create a favourable or positive atmosphere for dialogue and for putting your position across. So, we need to know the wisdom of how to engage in dialogue.

My personal experience is that I always achieve something positive from dialogue through this sort of wisdom. Other Muslims always try to defend the behaviour and policies of Muslim kings. But I never do that. I just say, "That person was a Muslim king. That was a Muslim dynasty. And it wasn't Islam." I always stress that one has to differentiate between Islam and Muslims, and that one should gauge Muslims according to Islamic teachings, and not Islamic teachings according to the behaviour of Muslims, including Muslim kings.

In this way, I have been able to promote a positive and open attitude among dialogue partners and engage in positive interactions with them. □



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