

ENGLISH BIMONTHLY ISSUE 100 APRIL-MAY-JUNE 2021

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



Acknowledgement of God's power and acceptance of our helplessness create feelings of piety and humble supplication.

A MAGAZINE FOR THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

Spirit of Islam bimonthly...

- ▶ Presents Islam, the religion of nature, in the contemporary idiom to help Muslims rediscover Islam from the original sources
- ▶ Explains Creation plan of God for humankind
- ▶ Enlightens people on the subject of global peace
- ▶ Addresses contemporary issues
- ▶ Assists the readers to deal with life's challenges
- ▶ Offers Spirituality to a wider circle of spiritual seekers
- ▶ Fosters greater communal harmony through religious understanding

United in prayers
SOI Editorial Committee

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

ISSUE 100 APRIL-~~MAY~~-JUNE 2021

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A MOMENT OF GRATITUDE

Dear readers,

You are reading the 100th issue of *Spirit of Islam*. Publication of this issue is a solemn occasion for us to offer our profound gratitude and thanks to Almighty God. This spiritual journey began in 2013. We have come a long way since then. With the grace of God, the editorial board under the guidance of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan continues to bring articles on the most pressing current challenges. It is our constant endeavour to address the current challenges from religious and spiritual perspectives. Without these perspectives, the very existence of humankind finds itself bereft of meaning as the editorial of this issue aptly illustrates. Confined in their homes during the lockdown, living under the constant threat of contracting Covid-19, people craved for meaning in this chaos and uncertainty. During this period, *Spirit of Islam (SOI)* published special issues from May to November 2020 covering topics such as *Truth, Science, God, Religion, Creation Plan of God, Death and Hereafter*.

SOI responded to this challenge first by going digital. To produce content of high quality and to make it more interactive, the second change we have embraced is to make **SOI** bimonthly. Now, this bimonthly comes with insightful new features. We are making *Children's Corner, Book Reviews, Opinions and Letters*, and *Newsletter* permanent features of the magazine. Thus, **we now publish *Spirit of Islam* as a BIMONTHLY and DIGITAL-ONLY edition.**

The magazine aims to cultivate a constructive and positive mind. We strive to introduce pristine teachings of Islam directly from the Quran and the Prophetic model enshrined in the books of *Hadith*. You will find in these pages answers from the Quran and the Prophetic model to the modern-day challenges.

The Quran makes it a solemn obligation of the believers to understand the message of the Quran and spread this message to every nook and corner of the earth. Believers not only failed to convey the message of Islam but they also misinterpreted and then misrepresented the divine teachings of Islam. The Islam of the Quran makes a person afraid of his fate in the Hereafter. He should live his life with the feeling that after death, he has to give an account of his deeds to God. **SOI** carries the message of Islam as it is.

We also wish to acknowledge our gratitude to the readers who throughout the years have continued to offer us words of encouragement and criticism. This magazine is for a serious and discerning reader. It has nothing to offer in the way of entertainment. In fact, it carries forebodings of a dire future if our lives are not God-oriented. That the magazine finds readership in all continents of the globe is a testimony that man is by nature a seeker of Truth and Meaning in life. God willing, we will continue to produce articles that provide answers to most fundamental urge of human beings.

In view of the present challenging situation, we conclude with the following prayer from the Quran:

'Lord, do not take us to task if we forget or make a mistake! Our Lord, do not place on us a burden like the one You placed on those before us! Our Lord, do not place on us a burden we have not the strength to bear! Pardon us; and forgive us; and have mercy on us. You are our Lord and Sustainer. (2: 286) □

Mohammad Usman

Editorial Committee



MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN PASSES AWAY

FOUNDER of *Centre for Peace and Spirituality (CPS) International*, author of more than 200 books, editor-in-chief of *Spirit of Islam* magazine and our guide and mentor passed away in the night of April 21, 2021. He was 96-years old. He was undergoing treatment in Delhi's Apollo Hospital. A lifelong crusader for peace, tolerance, nonviolence spiritual way of life, he had gained respect from the who's who of the world. He was an epitome of a God-fearing personality. A rare amalgam of classical Islamic disciplines and modern thought, he firmly believed that modern science has enlarged the canvas of God-realization.

He leaves behind his family and innumerable people from all around the world who identify themselves as part of CPS fraternity. They are fired by the zeal to propagate the ideology of peace enshrined in the Sacred Scripture of Islam. It is true that death has taken him away from us, but our relationship with him and what he stood for remains intact.

His demise was mourned by the President of India Mr Ram Nath Kovind in these words: (I am) deeply grieved by the demise of renowned Islamic scholar Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. A recipient of Padma Vibhushan, Maulana Wahiduddin made significant contribution to peace, harmony and reforms in the society.

Mr Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India also paid tribute to Maulana. He wrote on twitter: (I am) saddened by the passing away of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. He will be remembered for his insightful knowledge on matters of theology and spirituality. He was also passionate about community service and social empowerment.

Maulana spent his whole life in anticipation of meeting God. We pray for him the way Prophet of Islam taught us to pray for the deceased:

"O God, forgive Maulana Sahib, raise his rank among the rightly guided, grant him a successor in his remaining descendants. Forgive us and him, O Lord of the universe, and make his grave spacious, and light it for him." (*Sahih al-Muslim*)

Grieving the loss of Maulana, his granddaughter Sadia Khan prayed: *May God grant you the highest Paradise, may angels envy your stature in the Hereafter. You lived a poor man's life, replete with God's wisdom. You guided man well and served God better. May your meeting with God be one of eternal pleasure. Amen* □

A Lifetime of Peace, Love and Wisdom:
A short talk about Maulana by
Dr Maria Khan



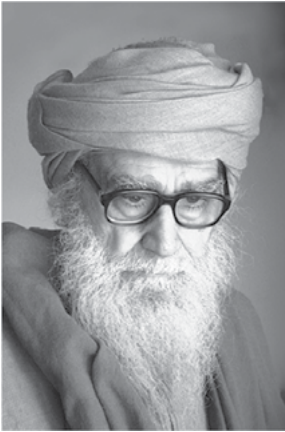
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One who fasts in all sincerity takes care to cast his entire life in the one consistent mould. In all of his affairs, he applies the constraints laid down by God. He checks himself from abusing others, stays his hand from persecution and halts in his steps towards injustice. As the Prophet said,

**“SUCH A MAN CAN BE LIKENED TO A HORSE
TIED TO HIS ROPE, WHO MOVES ONLY AS
FAR AS HIS STRING PERMITS HIM.”**

(MUSNAD AHMAD)

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 Vibhushan, 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 recognized as one of its most influential Muslims¹. 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.

LIFE WITHOUT GOD

IN the post-scientific age, it became commonplace for many to register themselves as following 'no religion'. People started to introduce themselves as 'nonreligious'. It is true indeed that science opened up for human beings hitherto unknown knowledge. Man has penetrated macro- as well as microworld. Facilities and ease of life that a person enjoys today could never be conceived without science. Science proved many ideas about the physical world as unfounded. Scientific enquiries continued, by leaps and bounds, shattering one cherished article of faith after another. Though major scientific minds refrained from making a direct claim about the non-existence of God, a crop of academicians emerged who fashionably started calling themselves 'atheists'. This practice had gained ground.

The question arises then if religion indeed is a vestigial part of human life. Is the universe as far as we know it, which is just 4% of the cosmos, enough to convince of looking no further? Is there nothing beyond this material world? Does science account for every question that is posed

1. The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims 2020, Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Jordan.

by everyday human experiences? These questions can be summed up as: Does science provide meaning to life?

The New Year celebrations of 2020 were shadowed by an imminent pandemic, which then became a reality. The blissful world we were accustomed to turned upside down. With the constant threat of contracting the disease, we were forced to stay away from our families and workplace. Suffering the loneliness and the pangs arising out of lockdown and the mental burden of a future that doesn't bode well,

An ideology that negates the authenticity of the religious narrative is quite incapable of finding meaning in seemingly negative experiences.

our very ideas of life became shaky. *The Guardian* columnist John Harris contrasts a religious and a nonreligious person in this regard. March 28, 2021 issue of *The Guardian* carried a very insightful piece (*How do faithless people like me make sense of this past year of Covid?*) by John Harris that directly touches this question. He writes:

"I felt a pang of envy that has occasionally surfaced in the past – this time to do with a year of lockdown, the sudden fear of serious illness and death, and the sense of all of it being wholly random and senseless. Was this,

I wondered, how religious believers were feeling? Or were they able to give their recent experiences at least a semblance of coherence and meaning?

Like millions of other faithless people, I have not even the flimsiest of narratives to project on to what has happened, nor any real vocabulary with which to talk about the profundities of life and death."

Thus, it becomes quite clear that an ideology that negates the authenticity of the religious narrative is quite incapable of finding meaning in seemingly negative experiences. When the limit of human intelligence is reached without providing credible answers, where do human beings turn to? The same article provides the following statistics:

"In the first phase of the pandemic, there were clear signs that a lot of us needed much more. Across 95 countries, Googling the word "prayer" increased by 50%, surpassing the level associated with Christmas and *Ramadan*. In April 2020, a service led by the Archbishop of Canterbury from his kitchen table drew 5 million viewers, described by the Church of England as the largest congregation in its history. And since then, as churches, mosques, synagogues and temples have been at the heart

of some communities' Covid experiences, the symbols and rituals of religion have made very visible comebacks. They were seen again in (...) doorstep vigil, complete with candles and massed silence, for the people lost to Covid."

This human tendency is described in the Quran in these words:

When man suffers some affliction, he prays to his Lord and turns to Him in penitence, but once he has been granted a favour from God, he forgets the One he had been praying to. (39: 8)

When an affliction befalls men, they cry out to their Lord, turning to Him in repentance. (30: 33)

The truth of the matter is that religious narrative is an integral part of human life. Disbelief makes this world meaningless. The bad experiences in life are part of the divine test. Those who respond positively to this test would be rewarded in the Hereafter. The only possible explanation of this universe is to believe in a 'universe with God'. The other option, according to John Harris, poses questions:

"(...) life without God has turned out to be life without fellowship and shared meaning." □

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan
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Follow Maulana at <http://www.speakingtree.in> (The Times of India)



Islam is not based on the quantity of rituals
we perform, but on the **level of realization**
of God that we attain in our lifetime.

FROM THE EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Prof. Farida Khanam is an author, editor, translator, public speaker and former professor of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Among her books are 'A Simple Guide to Sufism' and 'A Study of World's Major Religions'. She has translated into English many books authored by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. Currently the chairperson of CPS International, she is a regular contributor of articles to various publications. Prof. Khanam has edited Maulana's English translation of the Quran and has also translated his Urdu commentary of the Quran into English.

PAYING HOMAGE TO MY TEACHER

Prof. Farida Khanam Reminisces about Her Teacher

PROFESSOR MAJIDA ASAD was born in 1939 in Chandpur town in Bijnor district. Her father had an M.A. in philosophy from Aligarh Muslim University. He was editor of an Urdu newspaper, *Madinah*, and taught in Government College. Despite this, there were many obstacles to the education of Muslim girls. However, on seeing her great interest in education, her father sent her to a local Hindi medium school, Vedik Kanya Pathshala. She studied in this school till class VIII.

After the eighth class, she took private exam for HSC from Gokuldas School in Moradabad. She vividly remembers the day when she went there to get admission. Every girl from the school came out, curious to see a Muslim girl wearing a burqa. There was not a single Muslim girl student in the school. That was a strange sight indeed for those girls. Facing all odds she managed to pass her HSC exam with flying colours.

With the support from one of her father's friends, she got admission to Aligarh Muslim University. She was very good at her studies. She passed mathematics with distinction. Her excellent results provided her a chance to move ahead in the field of education.

In 1960 she completed her M.A. in Hindi from Delhi University. In 1961 she got a dictionary job in the Urdu department of Delhi University. She completed her Ph.D. in Hindi in 1964.

By now she had developed expertise in many aspects of her profession. She was an adept translator and writer. She wrote in fluent

Hindi characterized by both simplicity and force—essential features of a good style. The then-President of India, Dr Zakir Hussain had translated Plato's *Republic* into Urdu. She translated it into Hindi. Dr Zakir Hussain's daughter had penned her father's biography. This was also rendered from Urdu into Hindi by Prof. Majida Asad.

She then started teaching at Rani Lakshmi Bai College in 1966. Later she was appointed as an executive member of the Hindi Academy. She has authored 10 books, two of which have been published by the Publications Division. One book is on Festivals of the Indian Muslims (*Bhartiya Muslim Teuhaar aur Riti Riway*) and the other is on Dr Zakir Hussain. These books are very popular, and are available in the US as well.

To tackle any situation of disagreement and confrontation, she advises one to speak in a soft tone, present one's arguments with complete conviction. It is truthfulness in your personality that would subjugate your opponent is what she believes in.

In spite of the complete incompatibility of the environment she found herself in, she managed to overcome seemingly immovable obstacles to her journey towards academic excellence. She has been widely recognized for her academic output on both national and international fronts, by State as well as National governments of India. She has participated in many feature programmes on All India Radio, Doordarshan and other channels. She has contributed more than 300 articles, stories, memoirs, travelogues, etc. to leading Hindi newspapers and magazines

She has been appointed as secretary and member of various academic institutions such as Delhi Hindi Sansthan and Delhi Hindi Academy. She was a member of the Delhi Advisory Committee of the Delhi Administration. She was also a member of the Advisory Committee of the Ministry of External Affairs. She is mentioned in the book *Jawahar-e-Bijnor* (Gems of Bijnor), select biography of notable people from Bijnor.

She now lives in the United States. She has a house in New Delhi. Once in a year or two, she visits New Delhi. She has not forgotten her long and arduous journey. She knows the importance of the support that members of society can offer to the needy and the underprivileged people. She welcomes her guests and visitors with open arms. As a host, she appears like a family to her visitors. □

Prof. Farida Khanam

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A SERIOUS MISTAKE

Applying a Different Yardstick to Religion

IT is a common observation that people are very intelligent in their worldly affairs. They apply their reason as much as they can, they plan with understanding in every aspect, but in the matter of religion, their method is completely different. Here they think that asking an exalted religious personality to pray for them, visiting a shrine, paying a visit to an elder, reciting some words on the prayer beads, or repeating some rituals would ensure that their religious matters will be corrected automatically. But this dual approach is completely baseless. No one is going to benefit from this method.

Just as man uses his intellect in worldly affairs, so he must use his intellect in matters of religion. He has to use all the power of his consciousness. Without it, no one can be truly religious or deserving of Paradise.

The fact is that just as man uses his intellect in worldly affairs, so he must use his intellect in matters of religion. In the matter of religion too, he has to use all the power of his consciousness. Without it, no one can be truly religious or deserving of Paradise.

The process of becoming a true believer is, in every sense, a conscious process. It is imperative for every man and woman to consciously explore and then discover religion. Religiosity and piety should be conscious, not formal. One should make religion a part of his heart and mind in the fullest sense. One should embrace his religious life on the same conscious level as that of his worldly life. No one is an exception in this case.

The greatest thing that God has given to man is his intellect and consciousness. Those who do not find religion at the highest level of intellect and consciousness and do not adopt it on this same level will be considered as irreligious in the sight of God, even if they seem to be religious at the formal level. Religiosity is a conscious process, not just a formal process. □



FROM PRIDE TO ARROGANCE

A Journey towards Doom

PEOPLE usually have a sense of pride, such as pride in health, pride in knowledge, pride in family, pride in history, and so on. The general idea is that a sense of pride is very important. This creates positive qualities in a person such as self-respect, self-confidence and enthusiasm.

People believe that if a person does not have anything to be proud of, he will feel inferior. He will develop a temperament to feel oppressed and inferior. He will not be able to live among people with exalted thoughts.

But these justifications for pride are not correct. The fact is that pride is a moral evil. Pride is not a separate attribute; there are many other things associated with pride. For example, with pride come selfishness and a sense of superiority. Pride gradually takes the form of arrogance. Pride is a beautiful form of the evil that Satan described in these words: I am better than he is. (7:12)

Being 'proud' is not a single stand-alone adjective. Being 'proud' is a comparative adjective. Pride always arises in comparison to someone else. Inside the proud person, consciously or unconsciously, there is a feeling that 'I am better than others.'

This feeling is exactly what is mentioned in the Quran concerning *Iblis* (Satan). The proud man falls under the influence of Satan. Such a person gradually becomes arrogant and there is no doubt in this world that there is nothing worse than arrogance. The only difference between pride and arrogance is that of spelling. In reality, there is no difference between the two. □



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EVERY PERSON IS YOUR POTENTIAL FRIEND: MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

This is an interview of 2021 Padma Vibhushan awardee Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. He was awarded India's second-highest civilian honour for working tirelessly in the field of spirituality and peace for more than fifty years.

This interview was published in the April 2021 issue of 'Sirat-e-Mustaqeem', an Urdu monthly published from Pakistan. It was an online interview facilitated by Mr Tarique Badr (Pakistan) and Maulana Farhad (India). It was translated into English.

Could you kindly share something about your family background and your childhood?

According to official records, I was born on January 1, 1925. I was born in a village called Badhariya, which is in the Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh.

An ancestor of ours, named Hasan Khan, was a resident of Swat in Chitral, which at that time was part of Afghanistan. Hasan Khan had a brother called Husain Khan. It so happened that there was a dispute between the brothers over something. Hasan Khan moved out of Swat and migrated to an area called Jaunpur, which is in present-day Uttar Pradesh. At first, our forefathers lived there, and then later some members of the family settled in Azamgarh district, which is where I was born.

Could you please share something about your educational background?

As a child, I would often wander out of the house and head towards the orchards and fields. Outside the village, there was a bridge over a river. I would sit there, spending a long time watching the river flow and keenly observing other phenomena of nature. Sometime later, I began my initial formal education, in a *maktab* (religious seminary) in the village. After that, in 1938, I took admission at the *Madrasat-ul-Islah* at Saraimir (located in Azamgarh district) for Arabic and Islamic studies. After graduating from there, I found that I was actually irrelevant in society. I found out that my education had not been able to make me beneficial to contemporary society. I began studying commentaries on the Quran, *Hadith*, etc. once again. I also learnt the English language

and then studied secular disciplines such as science, philosophy, history, etc. In this way, I gained an awareness of the times, of the contemporary age, and with full certainty I rediscovered Islam.

What do you think are the basic principles for properly understanding the Quran?

The basic principles for properly understanding the Quran are to ponder on the Quran with a deconditioned mind and to beseech God with true God-consciousness and piety.

Could you please tell us something about your lifestyle?

In matters of lifestyle, my principle is: 'Simple living, high thinking'.

What do you think might be some of the difficulties in inviting people towards God—Islamic missionary activity—in these times?

In today's age, in no part of the world is the work of inviting people towards God difficult. The only condition is that one must do this work in a peaceful manner, with wisdom.

The biggest obstacle in this regard is Muslims themselves. One big mistake that Muslim thinkers made, starting in the age of colonialism, is that on account of having become politically dominated by the modern West, they began to think that modern thought or modern culture was intrinsically opposed to Islam. This led to an unnecessary confrontation and clash between them and those people who represented the modern mind. Because of this, the work that Muslims should have been engaged in—conveying the message of God to people—was unable to proceed naturally. My advice to Muslims is to put a complete stop to campaigns against modern thought. Only then will it be possible for the task of conveying the message of God to people to proceed in a natural manner.

What do you think are some of the qualities a person who invites people towards God (*dayee*) should have?

A person who conveys God's message to people should have complete well-wishing in his heart for the one whom he addresses. No provocation from the addressee should cause him to abandon this well-wishing for them.

Could you please reflect on your efforts to help Muslims secure their rights?

I have always given this advice to Muslims: They should abandon all campaigns of demanding their rights; and they should spend their life

as giver members of society, being of benefit to others. They should become givers, rather than takers.

Today, large parts of the world face communal violence—violence in the name of differences of religion, sect, language and so on. What are the causes for this?

The basic cause for this is the lack of the art of managing differences. There are two methods for handling differences. One is the method of extremism, and the other is the method of tolerance. Votaries of the method of extremism think that among the various schools of thought that exist only one is right and that the rest are wrong. Hence, they insist that all the others should be eliminated. In contrast, votaries of the method of tolerance or broadmindedness consider differences to be a matter of diversity. They have a practical formula for relating with this diversity: 'Follow one, respect all'. This is the right approach to adopt.

What should be done to end communal violence?

There is only one principle to overcome an environment of hate—and that is, to adopt unilateral reconciliation, as the Prophet of Islam did on the occasion of the Treaty of Hudaibiyah.

Many Muslims think they are oppressed in different parts of the world. What do you think about this view?

Muslims are not oppressed. They are simply paying the price for their unwise actions and approach. They need to live and act based on practical wisdom.

What advice will you give for reforming *madrasas*?

The people who are in charge of *madrasas* (religious seminaries) must have a proper understanding of the contemporary age. They should be aware of their times. By being aware of the age means that those who are associated with *madrasas* must function, work and plan in line with contemporary times. Without a proper understanding of the contemporary age and context, they cannot properly act, plan and function. This is why the *madrasa* authorities must have a good knowledge of the context and the conditions of the times. Failing this, their work will not produce any positive results.

Consider this analogy to understand the vital importance of having a deep understanding of the times and context one is living in: Today, we live in an age of peace. Now, if some person is unaware of today's age; and in an age of peace begins fighting with others, naturally, the results

of his action will be totally negative. He will not be able to obtain any positive result.

You give great stress on a deep understanding of the age. Have Muslim scholars before you said the same sort of thing?

Yes, there are examples of this among the *ulema* (Islamic scholars) in earlier times. For instance, in the first quarter of the 8th century, Wahab ibn Munabbih says that one of the pieces of wisdom from the family of the Prophet David is that it is incumbent on a wise person to be aware of his times. Likewise, Ibn al-Hajib al-Kurdi al-Maliki (d. AD 1248) says that among the characteristics of a scholar is that he should be aware of his times. The same point is made by Ibn Abd al-Barr (d. AD 1071) in his book *al-Kafi fi Fiqh Ahl al-Madinah*. Ibn Kathir (d. AD 1373) says about his teacher Burhanuddin al-Fazari that he was a scholar who was aware of his age. In the well-known book of *Hanafi* jurisprudence *al-Durr al-Mukhtar*, there is a very meaningful statement in this regard, according to which a person who does not have knowledge about his times is ignorant. The famous *Hanafi* jurisprudent Ibn Abidin Shami (d. 1889) commented that he who is unaware of the traditions of the people of his age is ignorant.

In the light of all this, you can see that I have here only repeated something that numerous Muslim scholars in the past have said.

In the light of your experiences of a life of 96 years so far, could you please tell us on what principles you think people should lead their lives?

To ignore the problems and to discover opportunities and avail of them in a wise, planned manner.

How do you view the overall conditions of Muslims in the context of modern times?

Many Muslim thinkers imagine that modern thought is a challenge that is against them. But if one analyzes the matter properly, one will learn that modern thought, in terms of its essence, is not against Islam. It is not anti-Islamic, as many Muslim thinkers think it is. In fact, it is conducive to Islam when rightly understood. The fact is that the modern mind and modern culture are completely compatible with Islam if these are understood properly. In terms of their essence or reality, there is no clash between Islam and modern thought.

So, the real problem, the actual problem, is not of changing modern thought, but rather, of changing the thinking of Muslims. And after this

happens, no problem will remain. The mindset or mentality of many Muslims is such that they oppose every new thing. It is this mentality that has created the problem. So, this mentality has to change.

What advice would you give Muslims in this regard?

They should adopt the following five-point formula

- Realization of God
- Positive thinking
- Conveying God's message to people
- They should put a complete end to hate and negative thinking. Instead of thinking of the West as an 'enemy of Islam', they should consider it as a supporter of Islam.
- Rather than having a political target, they should make leading a Hereafter-oriented life their target

If somewhere Muslims face opposition or a challenge from others, how do you think they should respond?

They should adopt the following verse of the Quran (41: 34) as their guiding verse:

Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend.

In the light of what this verse teaches, one could say that no human being is an eternal enemy of another human being. By birth, every person has the status of a potential friend. Hence, in accordance with the guidance of the Quran, the Muslims' approach in this matter should be that they should adopt the method of turning a potential friend into an actual friend.

In his commentary on the Quranic verse cited above, Qazi Sanaullah Panipati (d. 1810) writes (*Tafsir al-Mazhari*, Vol. 8, p. 296) that some Islamic scholars have taken this verse to suggest that good deeds are not all of the same level. Likewise, there are different levels or grades of evil. Now, if a foe does a bad deed, one should respond to it with a good deed. For instance, if someone behaves badly with you, then, you should ignore it. But there is a higher level of goodness that you can show. In return for the bad deed done to you, you should behave in a very good way with the person. If you respond to evil with goodness, it is undoubtedly the highest sort of moral action. □

SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF RAMADAN

Training in God-fearing and Patience

RAMADAN is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. It is observed by Muslims as a month of fasting. Fasting obligates a person to refrain from food, drink, foul talk, altercations and fights throughout the day, i.e. from sunrise to sunset. It is a month of training so that a person may lead the remainder of the year with this same mentality. The annual observance of *Ramadan* is regarded as one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

The basic purpose of *Ramadan*, according to Quran, is '*taqwa*'. 'Believers, fasting has been prescribed for you, just as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard yourselves against evil.' (2: 183) *Taqwa* means fear of God.

The other word that is used in the Quran in this regard is '*shukr*', that is, thanksgiving. 'The month of *Ramadan* is the month when the Quran was sent down as guidance for humankind with clear proofs of guidance and the criterion by which to distinguish right from wrong. Therefore, whoever of you is present in that month, let him fast, but he who is ill or on a journey shall fast a similar number of days later on. God desires ease for you, not hardship. He desires you to fast the whole month, so that you may glorify Him for His having guided you and so that you may be grateful to Him.' (2: 185)

These are the two basic values of *Ramadan*. When you observe fasting, you experience the true value of food and water. You experience that without food and water, it is not possible to live. By extension, one starts feeling that all things that we enjoy are gifts of God. God could withhold his gifts from us if He so decides. This realization creates *taqwa*.

The feelings of thanksgiving overpower us when in the evening we break the fasting. It is at these times that we feel how important these basic items are!

Another term associated with *Ramadan* is mentioned in the *Hadiths*. In the *Hadiths*, the month of *Ramadan* is described as '*Shahr-e-Sabr*'. '*Shahr-e-Sabr*' means 'a month of patience'. Fasting is an act of patience. So the three values mentioned in the Quran and *Hadiths* are Fear of God, Thanksgiving and Patience. Thus, the purpose of *Ramadan*, when one observes fasting, is to inculcate these three values in every believer.

The practices of the Ramadan offer a comprehensive approach towards training and developing oneself into a positive, patient, God-fearing and empathizing personality.

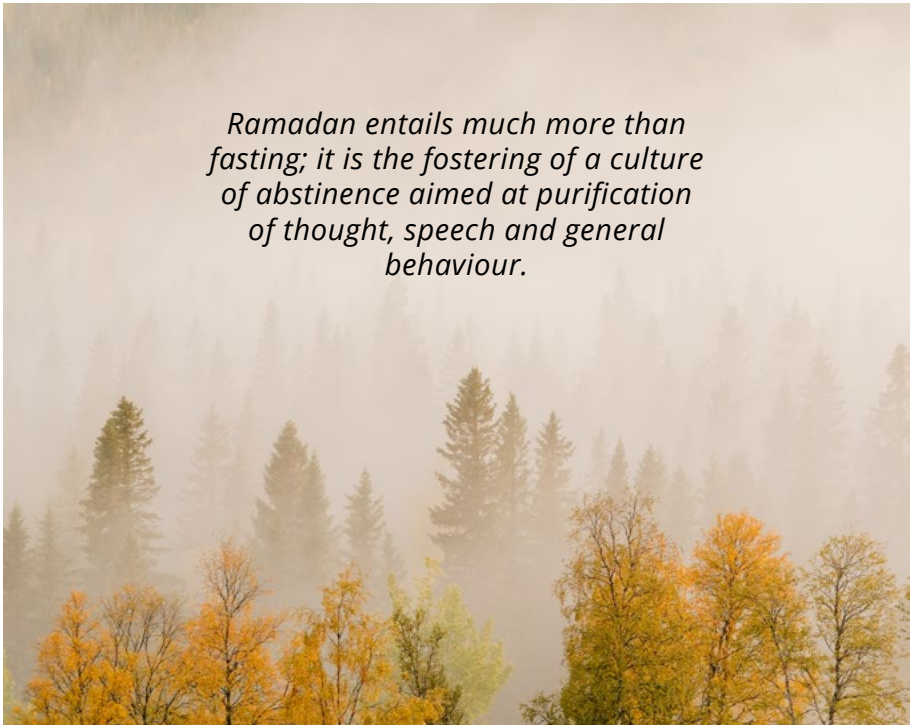
Tazkiya (purification of the self) is also one aspect of *Ramadan*. Purification means trying to inculcate positive values instead of negative ones.

One practice of *Ramadan* is *Eitekof*. It means 'going into seclusion'. In the month of *Ramadan*, a person voluntarily decides to spend some days, especially the last ten days of the month, in a mosque in prayer, contemplation and reading the Quran. This is known as *Eitekof*.

The practices of *Ramadan* thus offer a comprehensive approach towards training and developing oneself into a positive, patient, God-fearing and empathizing personality. □



Ramadan entails much more than fasting; it is the fostering of a culture of abstinence aimed at purification of thought, speech and general behaviour.



LAYLAT-UL-QADR

Seek, and You shall Find

SHAB-E-QADR or *Laylat-ul-Qadr* means, 'Night of Destiny'. This night is introduced in the Quran thus: We sent it [Quran] down on the Night of Destiny. And what will make you comprehend what the Night of Destiny is? The Night of Destiny is better than a thousand months; on that night, the angels and the Spirit come down by the permission of their Lord with His decrees for all matters; it is all peace till the break of dawn. (97: 1-5)

Based on some *Hadith* narrations, it is commonly believed that the Night of Destiny falls in any of the odd nights in the last ten days of *Ramadan*. On this night, God Almighty destines the future of people. Therefore, people generally try to worship more during these nights. In spite of Muslims generally praying throughout the night, no special form of worship is mentioned either in the Quran or *Hadith*.

The Prophet's wife Aisha asked Prophet Muhammad what she should do if she finds the Night. Prophet Muhammad said she should pray in these words:

O God! Certainly You are the One who grants forgiveness for sins. You love to forgive, so forgive me. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*)

The act of seeking forgiveness is significant because by doing so, a believer realizes the smallness of his being and the greatness of God. He realizes that God alone has the power to forgive and none else.

Laylat-ul-Qadr is not something mysterious. It is an occasion of profound spiritual feelings that translate into heartfelt prayers of forgiveness from God.

According to a *Hadith*, once the Prophet was in *Eitekaaf* (voluntary seclusion practised in the final phase of *Ramadan*). One night, he came out of the mosque but went back again. He later told his Companions that an angel had come to pass on the knowledge about the Night of Destiny. When the Prophet came out to inform the believers, he saw two of his people quarrelling. Instantly, the knowledge of the Night was taken away from the Prophet's mind. This incident has a great lesson for the believers! The fight was not an armed battle; the two believers were merely arguing, but even fighting with words is enough to have the divine knowledge taken away. Those who adopt the path of violence and suicide bombing can never become the recipients of divine blessings.

Positivity is the most important trait that makes a man worthy of receiving God's blessings. A positive mind will not engage in conflicts and would remain free of revenge, hatred, lust and negative thoughts.

Now, believers spend odd nights of the last ten days of *Ramadan* in search of *Laylat-ul-Qadr*. 'Finding' is an outcome of long preparation and search. A scientist spends years studying the subject and researching it, and after a long, gruelling effort, he makes that one discovery. Similarly, to find the Night of Destiny one must prepare the mind. This involves years of effort and supplication, at the end of which a believer is able to realize his insignificance and the supreme greatness of God.

Muslims think that staying awake an entire night would ensure finding the Night of Destiny. This is a far-fetched idea. A believer has to spend a lifetime to attain a prepared mind and then hope his prayer will be accepted by God.

To receive blessings or knowledge from God, a believer must be a positive personality in the ultimate sense of the word. Else the blessings may be showered, but not on him! Positivity is the most important trait that makes a man worthy of receiving God's blessings. A positive mind will not engage in conflicts and would remain free of revenge, hatred, lust and negative thoughts. □



To become enraged at antagonism
is surely **a sign of weakness.**

IDEAL INDIVIDUAL, IDEAL SOCIETY

Finding the Real Target

IT is possible to be an ideal person in this world, but it is not possible to realize an ideal society. A man builds his personality by his own decision. It is enough for a human being to have individual willpower, but it cannot be with the whole society. Because the will is within an individual, the collective will within society is just an imaginary concept. It does not exist in reality.

That is why in history there have been many individuals who possessed an ideal character, but it never happened that the whole society or the whole collective system became an ideal society. According to the creation plan of God, this is not possible.

According to God's creation plan, every woman and every man here enjoys complete freedom. No individual or government can revoke this freedom. Freedom means having more than one option. Because of this option, it will always be the case that some people will use freedom properly and some people will abuse it. This phenomenon makes it practically impossible to establish an ideal system at the level of society.

Freedom means having more than one option. Because of this option, it will always be the case that some people will use freedom properly and some people will abuse it.

That is why in Islam the individual is the target of action, not society. If a large number of individuals are reformed, the effect will reach society as well. Examples of this phenomenon abound throughout history, both in Islamic society and in secular society. The fact is that an ideal society will be established in the world to come, not in the present world. In order to create an ideal society in the present world, it is necessary to deprive people of their freedom. And this will happen only when the Angel *Israfil* blows the trumpet of the Final Hour by the command of God. □



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



SILENCE AND GOD-REALIZATION

THE Prophet of Islam usually observed silence. Many teachings have been recorded on this subject. For example, he said: "Hold fast to silence." (*Sunan al-Darimi*)

"A believer is one who either speaks good or remains silent." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*)

"Anyone who observed silence saved himself." (*Musnad Ahmad*)

"My silence should be contemplation." (*Musnad al-Shihab al-Qudhai*)

Observing silence means not only to remain quiet but also to contemplate. When a believer remains silent, he will ponder on his Lord. This is *marifah* or the discovery and realization of God. Silence is the door to *marifah*. True silence leads man to true *marifah*.

Silence gives man the opportunity to save himself from distractions. It brings greater clarity to his experiences and observations. He transforms ordinary occurrences into meaningful facts. He travels from the outer world to the inner world. He establishes his contact with God and His angels at the psychological level. All these factors strengthen man's God-realization. Contemplation is the source of God-realization

and without silence, the process of contemplation is not at all possible. Silence brings a person close to God. It provides the opportunity for him to achieve God-realization from the entire universe and this journey continues non-stop. □



SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

We wish to inform our readers that *Spirit of Islam* bimonthly is being published in digital format only.

We have stopped publishing the printed copies of the magazine.

Those who wish to read from a printed copy may do so by taking a booklet print-out of the digital magazine.

EID-UL-FITR

A Day of Spiritual Reckoning

EID-UL-FITR means 'festival or celebration of breaking the fast'. It is a religious holiday celebrated by Muslims marking the end of the month-long dawn-to-sunset fasting of *Ramadan*. Muslims are not permitted to fast on the day of *Eid*. *Eid-ul-Fitr* has a particular *salat* (Islamic prayer) that consists of two *rakats* (units) generally performed in an open field or large hall.

Eid-u-Fitr, though a part of Islam, does not find mention in the Quran. The mention and details of this festival are to be found in the corpus of *Hadith* literature. According to a *Hadith* of the Prophet of Islam, the day of *Eid-ul-Fitr* is a day of reward, that is, the reward for fasting during the month of *Ramadan*. In this way, the day of *Eid* becomes a day of joy—a day when Muslims thank God for His blessings.

Fasting has been enjoined on Muslims during the month of *Ramadan*. The training, spiritual insights and the lessons that the Muslims have learned from the Quran during this month must be applied throughout the year. The feelings of thanksgiving, piety, peace necessitate Muslims to live as peaceful members of their society. Besides, it is also their responsibility to inculcate among other members of the society that

peace is the basis for all kinds of development. It creates an atmosphere of positive living for the individual, society and nation. All kinds of development are possible in an environment of peace.

According to Islam, happiness is for one who fulfils his duties. On the day of Eid, every Muslim must take the pledge that he would fulfill his responsibilities towards his fellow beings.

Islam being a religion of peace in the full sense, we find that today the image of Islam has become one of a violent religion. It is therefore high time that Muslims resolve on the day of *Eid* to strive to change this distorted image of Islam. Muslims must convey to the world that the teachings of Islam are wholly based on peace.

Charity begins from home. As such, Muslims should, first of all, decide to abstain from all such activities as disrupt the atmosphere of peace in society; they should sedulously refrain from reacting to provocative situations, and must adopt the path of patience in all circumstances.

According to Islam, happiness is for one who fulfils his duties. On the day of *Eid*, every Muslim must take the pledge that he would fulfil his responsibilities towards his fellow beings. This would make him deserving of greater reward in God's eyes.

The spirit of *Ramadan* should never be forgotten. Unfortunately the month of *Ramadan* and *Eid-ul-Fitr*, both have been reduced to cultural phenomena. The lessons of these two great events are relegated to the back. These are celebrated with great pomp. Great Persian spiritual poet and mystic Hafiz Shirazi (1315-1390) has pointed out this fallacy in one of his couplets:

*Tan parvariye khalq, fuzun shudd za riyazat
Juz garmiye iftaar, nadarad ramzaan heich*

It means intense physical constraints (in fasting) have only increased people's use of worldly things. *Ramadan* is now nothing but the frenzied exercise to get things ready for breaking of the fast.

It is high time that Muslims take the pledge to follow what the Prophet and his pious Companions did; and adopt a positive, peaceful course of action at all times and in all situations. □



Realization of God

elevates only that heart which
is totally **free from negative thinking**; such
realization will never enter a heart which is
not free of hatred, anger, and vengefulness.

TWO LIVES

Desire-based, Principle-based

MAN has been created by his Creator in such a way that contradictory attributes are found in him. That is why it is said that man is a mixture of opposites. For example, on the one hand, there are powerful desires within man, and on the other hand, there is a deep awareness of principles as well. Man's desires lead him to a superficial kind of selfishness, and the awareness of principles creates in him the thought that he should live for higher realities.

By adopting the desire-based approach to life, man lowers himself to the level of an animal. On the contrary, a person who adopts a principled life puts himself in the ranks of angels.

In the same way, the life of every human being lies between two contradictory requirements: desire and principles. By adopting the desire-based approach to life, man lowers himself to the level of an animal. On the contrary, a person who adopts a principled life puts himself in the ranks of angels. What is a desire-based life? It is the desire to live under the influence of superficial emotions; namely anger, revenge, malice, envy, violence, intolerance, selfishness, greed, hatred, arrogance, selfishness, and dishonesty, etc. These are all different forms of desire. In social life, these desires arise time and again

in man. Those who fall prey to these desires, their lives are engulfed by the flood of desire. Though they appear as human beings, they begin to live on the level of animals.

The second case is that of a principled person. A principled person knows how to love others, who keeps his promises, who is always honest in matters, who speaks the truth in all circumstances, who is free from double standards, who is humble, who knows how to acknowledge others, who has the quality of forgiving, who is selfless, who has the temperament to fulfil his responsibilities. Such a person is a principled person, and only such a principled person deserves to be called a human being. □



ANGER MANAGEMENT

Master Advice for Life

A MAN came to the Prophet Muhammad and asked him, "O Prophet, I seek advice!" the Prophet replied: "Don't get angry." Then the man asked him, "What else?" The Prophet Muhammad replied for the second time: "Don't get angry." The man asked again "what else?", and the reply again was "Don't get angry." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*)

Anger is one of the major things that could cause a relationship to go sour. Anger stokes a quarrel, which, if pursued, leads to personal dislike, and finally, to full-fledged hatred. Hatred eventually leads to evil. In any relationship, any trouble is exacerbated by anger. Anger is a natural phenomenon, and the only solution is to control it.

Anger in itself is not evil. It becomes evil when it is allowed to spin out of control and affect people's lives.

Rage is an undesirable reaction to a temporary provocation. It is much like a fire that flares up for a short while and then dies down for lack of fuel. If we understand this, anger will not result in any serious disharmony.

An unpleasant word or experience can make the fire in our mind suddenly flare up, but it only lasts for a short while. When we are angry, we should remain quiet, and try to calm ourselves before returning to dealing with the issue. It would not be wise to confront any adverse situation in anger.

According to a study published in *The Guardian* (May 12, 2019), "Feeling anger can alter the way we view risks. Studies have shown that it can make us more impulsive and make us underestimate the chances of bad outcomes." The article also highlights that "the way we process anger feelings also contributes to our mental wellbeing."

When the Prophet said, "Don't get angry", it means, don't get angry even when provoked. Respond positively even in negative situations. Always adopt positive thinking.

In the face of problems, anger further deteriorates the situation. By controlling anger we can develop the capability of responding positively in negative situations; taking the right decisions under difficult conditions; of discovering practical solutions to all problems. □

THE PRIMACY OF PRAYER

Never Lose Sight of the Hereafter

ISLAM enjoins believers to perform *salat* five times daily. *Salat* is an Islamic form of worship and it has a specific ritual. Performing this ritualistic practice requires the availability of water to perform ablutions, a comfortable space where one can perform all parts of *salat* while facing the direction of Kabah in Makkah. It may happen that a person is travelling and the time to perform *salat* approaches. It is also possible that a person is engaged in spreading the word of God and striving his utmost for the cause of God, even in these instances, when the time for prayer approaches, Islam asks one to leave every other thing aside and perform *salat*.

However, in cases of emergency, believers are permitted to shorten their prayers. They can perform *salat* while sitting, lying down or travelling. It is not necessary to keep facing Kabah throughout *salat* if that is not possible. But believers must perform *salat*. There is no exemption from this obligation.

Why is this so? This great emphasis is to remind the believers what is of true importance in this ephemeral world. What is of real value is realizing and remembering God. All acts of religion, whether in the nature of prayer (*salat*) and alms-giving (*zakat*) or the propagation of God's word or the struggle for God's cause, have the ultimate purpose of remembering God. Their aim is to create a man who lives with the thought of God at every moment and under all situations; who fears God in moments of apprehension and longs for Him in moments of hope; who relies solely on God; whose attention is focussed on God.

If he achieves something, he believes it to be from God and if he suffers deprivation, he takes it as being God's command. The whole of his inner existence should be lost in the majesty and grace of God. This orientation is such an important matter that, even in most critical times one is directed to say one's prayer in some form or the other. This is to be reminded of what is of real value in any situation, which will be carried along with one to the Hereafter. □



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.



THE END OF THE AGE OF PERSECUTION

IN chapter 8 of the Quran, the Prophet and his Companions are commanded: “Fight them until there is no more *fitnah* (religious persecution), and religion belongs wholly to God.” (8: 39) It is not a political commandment. This verse explains the principle of Islam in one particular matter of religion.

In the verse, ‘*fitnah*’ means religious persecution. In ancient times, the monarchy was established everywhere. The kings had adopted the religious principle that the religion of the state should be the religion of all the inhabitants of the country. At that time, adopting a religion other than the religion of the state was considered synonymous with rebellion against the state, and people were meted out a harsh treatment what is known in history as religious persecution. Due to this, it became a common proverb that: People usually follow the religion of their rulers.

This way of making religion a matter of state was against God’s creation plan. According to God’s creation plan, the present world is a world of test and trial. Therefore, every human being has the freedom to adopt any religion he wants. The same thing is stated in this verse of the Quran: There shall be no compulsion in religion. (2: 256) Religious coercion, or subjugation of religion to the state, was tantamount to the negation of God’s creation plan. So that man can freely adopt any religion he wants, the Prophet and his Companions were commanded to put an end to religious persecution. Adopting a religion is a matter of individual choice, not of law and politics. This task of ending the

fitnah was a one-time task that was accomplished perfectly in the time of the Prophet and his Companions. As history shows, this event took place in the seventh century AD.

Events show that twice in history, religion was declared a subordinate branch of the state. The first instance was in the time of the ancient monarchy, and the second instance, in the time of the modern communist empire. Both systems were against God's creation plan. Therefore, God created such conditions that these two systems came to an end forever. The system established under the ancient monarchy was overthrown by the early Muslims, and the United States was used as a means to overthrow the modern communist empire. It was a divine plan that ended the communist empire without the use of violence.

Religious freedom is now enjoyed all over the world. Every country now enjoys religious freedom in the fullest sense. Under the United Nations Charter of Human Rights, all countries collectively recognize the right to religious freedom for all. At the same time, in the constitution of every country, including India, the right to religious freedom is fully granted to every man and woman.

After this global change, the era of war is over. All that is to be done now is to make full use of this freedom and to spread the religion of God within every small and large house in the world, as foretold in the *Hadith*: "There will be no home remaining, big or small, in which God will not have entered the word of Islam." (*Musnad Ahmad*)

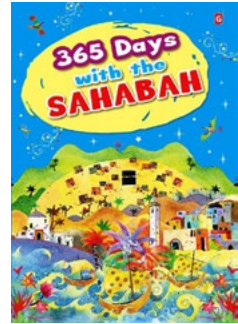
According to the Quran, 'He (God) created death and life so that He might test you, and find out which of you is best in conduct.' (67: 2) It means man has been settled in this world, and he has been given complete freedom so that he can live his life as he pleases. Then, according to his deeds, he will get the eternal reward or eternal punishment commensurate with his deeds. The Quran is a vivid description of this divine plan of creation.

In this world, the state of religious oppression is against God's creation plan. It is an interference in God's natural system. God can never tolerate this kind of interference in His world. He will surely end it; sometimes through one human group and sometimes through another. This is a matter of divine operation. This type of operation is not performed by angels. It is accomplished while maintaining the veil of causes and effects. Both these incidents are historical examples of this. □

CHILDREN'S CORNER

365 Days with the Sahaba

Goodword is an award-winning publishing company with a splendid range of Islamic Books in many languages. It offers innovative products for children, including Quran stories, moral stories, craft and activity books, gift packs, Islamic games, Arabic and Islamic readers for home and school. **365 Days with the Sahaba** is a unique book that contains 365 anecdotes from the lives of the pious Companions of the Prophet Muhammad. These anecdotes provide lessons in morality and ethics. The following is a selection of two anecdotes from this book.



Upper Hand is Better than the Lower Hand

WHEN Hakim ibn Hizam embraced Islam, he vowed to himself that he would atone for whatever he had done before Islam and whatever amount he had spent in opposing the Prophet, he would spend the same amount now for the cause of Islam. He sold *Dar al-Nadwah* (Assembly House) for one hundred thousand dirhams and gave the entire money for the cause of Allah.

While Hakim was generous in his spending for the sake of Allah, he still craved wealth. After the battle of Hunayn, he asked the Prophet for some of the booty. The Prophet gave him what he had asked. He then asked for more and the Prophet gave him more. Hakim was still a newcomer to Islam and the Prophet was more generous to newcomers to reconcile their hearts to Islam. So, Hakim ended up with a large share of the booty.

Then the Prophet told him: "O Hakim! This wealth is indeed sweet and attractive. Whoever takes it and is satisfied will be blessed by it and whoever takes it out of greed will not be blessed. He would be like someone who eats and is not satisfied. The upper hand is better than the lower hand (it is better to give than to receive)."

The kind words of advice had a deep and immediate effect on Hakim. He was mortified and said to the Prophet: "O Messenger of Allah! By Him who has sent you with the truth, I shall not ask anyone after you for anything."

During the caliphate of Abu Bakr, Hakim was called several times to collect his stipend from the *Bayt al-Mal* (the treasury) but he refused. He did the same during the caliphate of Umar ibn al-Khattab. He lived a long life and died at the age of 120 years.

Simple Living

Aisha was born into a highly respectable wealthy family, but she patiently bore the hardships, simplicity and ascetic lifestyle of the Prophet due to her loyalty to Allah and her devotion to the Prophet and his cause. Aisha was the youngest of the Prophet's wives at the time of her marriage. Her room was about 10 feet long with mud walls and floor. The roof was thatched with date leaves and the household items consisted of one bed, a mat, a pillow stuffed with date fibres, a water pitcher, a bowl and two earthen jars to store dates and flour.

She underwent many hardships. Yet, Aisha was content and did not complain. Aisha once told Urwah bin Zubair, her nephew, 'Sometimes, for three long months, we never cooked anything in our house because we did not have anything during that period.' He then asked, 'How did you survive without anything?' She replied, 'We used to eat dates and drink water or sometimes some of our neighbours would send us some food and milk' After the death of the Prophet, Aisha continued to live an ascetic existence dedicated to fasting, prayers, charities, and the care of orphans and the destitute. □



LETTERS AND OPINIONS

Prof Farida Khanam's interview published in the March 2021 issue of Spirit of Islam received many comments from the readers. Some of them are presented here. The feedbacks have been edited for consistency, clarity and brevity. Some of the comments were in Urdu which have been translated into English. A gift package has been despatched to all of them.

Aapa's contribution to the mission is paramount. She has been translating Maulana's works for more than 40 years. Because of her tireless efforts, today we have a body of Islamic literature available in English. Without English books, the CPS mission would not have been a global mission. **-Dr. Saniyasnain Khan (New Delhi)**

Farida Aapa is truly an inspiration and motivation to me and all women. Through her sheer dedication, hard work and focus, she has lived every word of her father's teaching: Starve the problem and feed the opportunity. By accepting her role in the CPS mission, she has carried it forward so impressively. **-Asra Masood (Bengaluru)**

By reading aapa's inspirational story, I am glad to inform you that I've regained my spirit to serve humanity by spreading the words of Almighty. I plan to make the best use of my time for my personal development and to gain the Quranic wisdom so that I can inculcate it in my upcoming generations. I also wish to inspire the present youth around me to ponder over their creation and the creation plan of Almighty God. **-Ayesha Kausar (Telengana)**

Reading about aapa's journey from an ordinary village to being such an integral part of the CPS mission is very inspiring. Keeping aapa's life ahead of me, I shall take baby steps towards educating myself and my family. I am not now afraid to fail but inspired to try once more. I will read, read, read and acquire knowledge and have intellectual discussions with my family. **-Subia Kausar (Bengaluru)**

From Farida aapa's story, I learnt a very valuable lesson that one should make the best use of the available opportunity. One should not waste precious time waiting for the right moment. It is a wrong approach to keep waiting for big opportunities. God will make a way for you if you are sincere and give your best. **-Tazain (Bengaluru)**

I thank you aapa for your motivational words that truly inspire us all. Your struggle for learning will always make us realize how blessed we are to get a good education now. You are an inspiration to all of us.
-Lubna (Chennai)

Her story is a great example to me. She put in tremendous efforts in learning the religion of Islam and in spreading the true message of the Quran.
-Saira Rafi (Chennai)

Though I am a member of CPS, I always felt disappointed as I could not take the cause of the mission further. After reading Farida aapa's interview, I have converted my disappointment into greater conviction. I have understood that I have to patiently work foremost on myself by developing intellectually and spiritually and wait for an opportunity to serve in the way of God.
-Saliha (Hassan)

Prof. Khanam struggled hard for quality education. Her ready-to-learn and courageous attitude led her to learn from opportunities one could never realize were even there. These points gave me the motivation to continue my struggle in my pursuits in both the fields of secular as well as religious education with faith in God that He will provide me the opportunities.
-Javeriya Iram (Raichur)

Reading Farida aapa's interview made me realize that one should not complain even in dire situations. With the right planning, one can achieve great targets. I was thinking at this age, there is nothing much I could do. Now I aspire to study more and to involve my family in my intellectual pursuits.
-Mazherunnisa (Bengaluru)

Saraimir is my hometown. The conditions described in Farida aapa's interview are more or less still the same. Girls' education is just as difficult today. Aapa's inspiring story is the result of her grit, determination and the special grace of God Almighty.

The most important and biggest task in Farida aapa's whole story was to come to Delhi from Azamgarh. It was a big deal then, and it is still a challenging task for a girl from a village in Azamgarh to venture out of the village all alone. Even married women are not allowed to travel alone. *In Sha Allah*, this story of aapa will be a beacon for the women of my native village.
-Mirza Omair Azmi (Azamgarh)

Dr. Farida Khanam's interview in the March issue of *Spirit of Islam* has many lessons:

- Contrary to popular tradition, aapa's travelling alone on such a long journey in the 50s shows that when you believe in your goal, you

should act with total dedication; you should not be overwhelmed by the negative traditions of society.

- In Delhi, when aapa could not live with her father, a family supported her, and treated her like a family member, arranging free tuition. The lesson we learn from this incident is that apart from parents, society should also be aware of the needs and difficulties of the nation's future and be ready to help the members of society.
- Failure in the exam should not break your resolve. You should start preparing again, without harbouring any complaints against anyone.
- Unlike ordinary graduates, aapa was not content just to get a degree. She set herself the goal of learning high-quality English. This passion for continuous learning set her apart from other degree holders.
- Maulana's forcing aapa to pursue a specialization in English instead of Persian at the right time shows that courage, determination and ability are not enough to succeed; it is equally important to be aware of the needs of the time. **-Principal Ansari Naeem Ahmed (Mumbai)**

Dr. Farida Khanam's interview appears like a historical piece spanning over sixty or seventy years. It is a spiritual journey that she started at the age of thirteen from Saraimir, Azamgarh.

Her story is the reflection of society and an outline of the paradigm shift in the way women's role in society is envisioned. It describes how the perception of women in society has moved from negative to positive. The role of a woman in society is as important in the sphere of religion as in mundane affairs. Prof. Khanam's personality is a practical model to emulate. **-Dr Shabbir Ahmad Parray (Kashmir)** □



THE WORLD MOURNS THE LOSS OF MAULANA

Condolences started to pour in from all over the world as soon as the news of Maulana's demise was out on the media. A few of the messages are listed here:

I am much saddened by the passing away of the most revered Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. Maulana Sahib was a true holy leader in this complicated world of our times. His liberal approach to religion and his humble lifestyle mark him as an outstanding religious leader. His needs were minimum and his deeds were total and all-embracing. I clearly remember him saying in a public talk "If a small car takes me to where I have to go, why should I have a bigger and a luxurious car". His scholarship not only in Islam but also other religious and spiritual traditions is an exemplary.

In my humble efforts of promoting inter-religious understanding and harmony which is one of the life missions of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, I cherish Maulana Sahib's patronage. I offer my deep-felt condolences to all the family members and members of CPS International for the huge loss. **-Lama Doboomb Tuku**

The nation has lost a genuine Islamic scholar in the passing away of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, who always promoted goodwill and harmony through properly interpreting the religion. RSS expresses its deep condolence on his demise. **-Dattatreya Hosabale, Sarkaryavah, RSS**

I just received news yesterday that yet another of our 'Mountains' has passed. I was graced to meet him some 20 years ago in Harrow when he was on a rare visit to the UK. He very kindly received me and my young daughter in his hotel room. I immediately asked if I could photograph him the following day which we did in the gardens of the hotel. I was always struck by his deep calmness, compassion and inner beauty. I always wished I had the opportunity to rephotograph him as he became only more luminous in his later years. Unfortunately, I was unable to make that journey. He spent a lifetime serving God and people. One small consolation for us is that when these great people die, they become more active in the spiritual world. **-Peter Sanders**



BOOK REVIEW

Name of the Book: *Non-Violence and Peace-Building in Islam*

Author: Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Published by: Goodword Books, New Delhi (India)
(www.goodwordbooks.com)

Year: 2017

Pages: 127

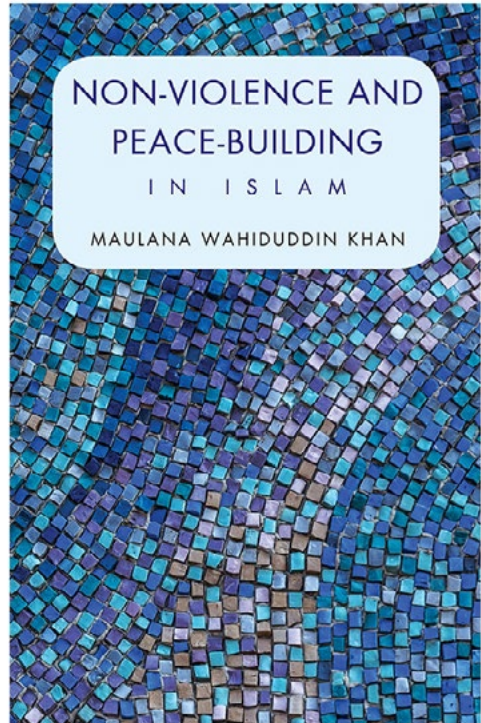
ISBN: 978-93-5179-158-4

Reviewed by: Mohsin Khan

HARDLY a day passes without the media reporting some violent barbarity somewhere in the world being committed in the name of Islam. Today, there is an urgent need for popularizing an alternate understanding of Islam, one rooted in a commitment to peace, nonviolence and inter-community harmony. Peace and prosperity for all peoples, not just Muslims alone, crucially depends on this. Promoting that understanding of Islam has been one of the major concerns of New Delhi-based Islamic scholar Maulana Wahiduddin Khan over a great part of his life. In

this latest book of his, a collection of 21 short but deeply insightful essays, he persuasively argues the case for nonviolence as a means for negotiating differences, based on his understanding of Islam.

In his Introduction, Maulana remarks that because today the world is so closely interdependent, peaceful, mutually-beneficial relations between different religious communities have become simply indispensable. "We simply cannot afford to resort to conflict in order to resolve disputes," he rightly notes. In the face of what he says is "the serious



threat to peace posed by terrorism perpetrated in the name of Islam” he stresses the “urgent need” to articulate and promote a “positive” approach to conflict-prevention, conflict-resolution and peace-building. This approach, which he outlines in this book, is based on inspiration from the Quran and from the life of the Prophet Muhammad, and also draws on the Maulana’s own personal experiences as well as his reflections on inter-communal relations, particularly in India. The primary focus of the book, he notes, is on conflict prevention, based on the understanding that if conflicts can be prevented at the very outset, violence can be completely avoided.

In setting out his vision of an Islamically-inspired vision of nonviolence, the Maulana writes that “Islam positively encourages Muslims to work for peace and for harmonious relations between them and people belonging to other communities.” Critics, however, could easily point to scores of Muslim groups across the world that show no sign of such enthusiasm for inter-community harmony, groups claiming to speak for Islam that foment hate for other communities and are engaged in terrorist violence. But here one needs to consider an important point the Maulana makes—that one must distinguish Islam from Muslims, implying, therefore, that the claims of such self-styled ‘Islamic’ groups are bogus. This point leads the Maulana to insist that “Contemporary instances of Muslims resorting to violence in the name of their religion” are “in complete contrast to Islamic teachings.”

The Maulana argues that competition has been written into the law that runs this world. Being thus part of God’s Creation Plan, there will always be differences of opinion between people. So, while they can never be done away with completely, the wise course is to respond to challenging situations involving differences with others in a wise way, without recourse to conflict and violence. This holds true for differences at all levels—for differences between individuals, between communities and even between entire countries.

In line with the laws that God has devised for the world, the Maulana says, peace and success are possible only through patience, not impatience; positive action, not denouncing and protesting against others; pragmatism, not emotionalism; reform of the self, not agitating against or condemning others; acknowledging one’s own mistakes, not seeking to prove others wrong.

The Maulana provides evidence from the Islamic tradition to back this point, citing, for instance, the Prophet Muhammad’s decision to avoid confrontation with his opponents and his agreeing to their conditions

at the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. Skilful handling of differences that could otherwise lead to conflict, he indicates, requires one to unilaterally offer and accept peace and to refuse to get provoked by others. It requires one to ignore lesser evils and not to make them into a prestige issue that can only further magnify differences and foment conflict. It also requires one to introspect and to realize that one alone is responsible for one's misery, not others. The Maulana appeals to his fellow Muslims to recognize this and to stop blaming others for their woes and to desist from conflict with them.

Reflecting on relations between Muslims and others, the Maulana stresses what he calls the "Islam of humility". This he contrasts with what he terms the "Islam of pride", which, he says, leads those who follow this warped interpretation of Islam to imagine that they are superior to others, a "psychology" that, he contends, "creates all the differences and disputes that Muslims are beset with today."

On the other hand, the "Islam of humility" brings Muslims close to others, the Maulana explains, automatically resolving conflicts. "The fear of God takes away from them any sense of superiority [...] In the face of the prejudice of others, their God-consciousness makes them humble and modest. This acts like water in the face of the fire of other people's prejudices. And it brings violence to an end". The "Islam of humility" leads to resolving differences and ending conflict through love and compassion.

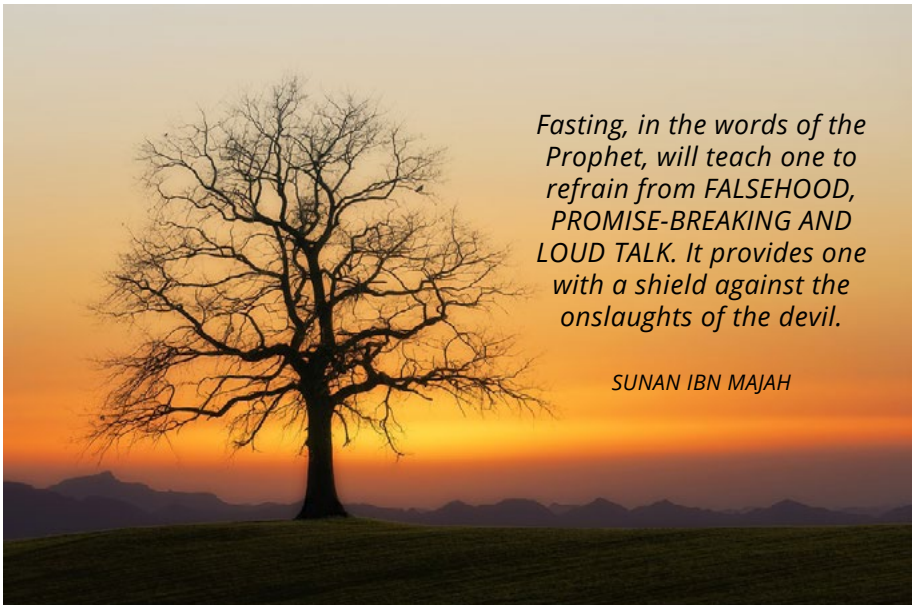
Furthermore, the Maulana insists that instead of complaining about others and making demands on them—something that almost inevitably magnifies differences and easily leads to conflict—Muslims should make themselves eligible and become useful to others. That itself would help reduce differences, defuse conflicts and build harmonious inter-community relations. The key to a successful life in this world, the Maulana says, is to be beneficial to others, indicating that if Muslims proved themselves to be of benefit to others, there would be no conflict between them. "People and groups gain a position of respect if they prove to be useful" he explains, adding, "In contrast, those who lose their usefulness are dumped in the dustbin of history and the world moves on."

In the concluding essay of the book, titled *'Consciousness of the Hereafter'* the Maulana reminds us that we, after all, are merely travellers in this world and that what awaits us after our short span here is the eternal life after death (for which this present life is a period of preparation).

The Hereafter is something that all religions, not just Islam, teach. Someone who is conscious of God and the Hereafter, the Maulana says, "will refuse to get involved in controversies that will divert him from his spiritual goal".

Mindfulness of the ephemeral nature of this world (and of the many worldly issues that people seem to never cease squabbling about) and consciousness of the eternity of the Hereafter, then, can help people avoid wasting their lives in pointless conflict with others, thereby ruining their prospects in the eternal Hereafter. That itself can be a powerful means of promoting peace and harmony and of resolving differences between individuals and groups.

This slim book, packed with deep spiritual insights from one of the world's leading exponents of Islamic nonviolence, simply cannot afford to be missed by anyone interested in the very important issues that it discusses. The eminently practical tips for conflict-prevention, conflict-resolution and peace-building that the Maulana provides can be found immensely useful by Muslims and others alike. □





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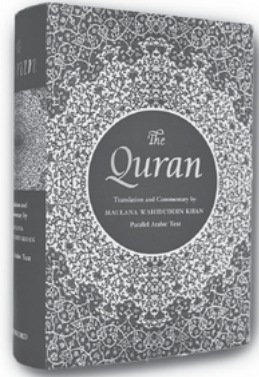
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- ▶ Prayers
- ▶ Prophet Muhammad
- ▶ Arguments for the Hereafter
- ▶ Quran

THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures

The Quran is the book of God. It has been preserved in its entirety since its revelation to the Prophet of Islam between CE 610 and 632. It is a book that brings glad tidings to humankind, 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



If God were to grant abundant provision to [all] His creatures, they would act insolently on earth, but He sends down in due measure whatever He will, for He is well aware of His servants and watchful over them: it is He who sends rain after they have despaired and spreads His mercy far and wide. He is the Protector, Worthy of All Praise. Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth and all the living creatures He has dispersed throughout them: He has the power to gather them all together whenever He will. (42: 27-29)

Human life on earth depends on water, but the supply of water is completely in God's hands. If God does not provide water, man cannot obtain it on his own. Similarly, the distribution of sustenance is at the will of God. While doing so, God takes into account the depth of the human soul and, according to this, allocates sustenance to everybody. If people are given greater abundance than they can deal with equanimity, they will become obstreperous and arrogant and, as a result, oppression and disturbance will prevail everywhere on the earth.

We observe that when a farmer scatters seeds, he also has the power to reap the harvest therefrom. This observation is indicative of the fact that God too can marshal all His dispersed creations and gather them in His Court where the future of humanity will be collectively decided. For the Creator for whom it was possible to create and spread His creations far and wide, why should it be impossible to collect and re-assemble them after death?

Whatever misfortune befalls you is of your own doing—God forgives much—you cannot escape Him anywhere on earth. You have no protector or helper other than God. (42: 30-31)

The present world has been created and made subject to the law of cause and effect. So, if an individual is beset by adversity, it is clearly due to his own shortcomings. However, it sometimes happens that a man commits a sin, yet remains unaffected by its baneful outcome.

All these events happen in the world in order that man should learn a lesson from them. When he sees that whatever people receive is commensurate with their deeds, he should infer that, in the Hereafter also, everybody will be rewarded according to his deeds. Similarly, when he sees that somebody has been guilty of a lapse, yet goes unpunished, he should learn the lesson that God is Merciful and Gracious, and that if a man turns towards Him, He, in His Mercy, will save him from the consequences of his shortcomings. If a man's Faith is deep, he comes to the point of discerning a picture of the Hereafter in the events of this world. □

**Prayer in one respect is the
worship of God, and in another
it is an acknowledgement of the
divinity of God. It is to surrender
before God, attributing all kinds
of greatness to Him alone.**

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ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

The remedy for ignorance is asking questions. (Prophet Muhammad)

The spirit of enquiry is the hallmark of an open society and the above saying of the Prophet aptly illustrates this principle. A culture of curiosity and open-mindedness will foster development in any society by motivating its members to learn enthusiastically and enrich their knowledge. This is because awareness of one's ignorance is half of knowledge, as it becomes a stepping-stone to seeking and finding answers. A questioning mind is like a flowing river that is replenished with fresh thoughts and ideas and continues on its journey.

When it is said that one should remember God at all times, how exactly does one do it? Suppose one is busy doing something: say, eating one's meal or going for a walk, or driving a vehicle. If one's mind is on God at every moment during this process, will it not distract one from the task one is doing? So, in this context, how can one be engaged in dhikr (remembrance) of God all the time?

Remembering God at all times does not mean remembering Him every moment—it means most of the moments. There will be some moments in which you are engaged in other things, but this may also lead, in an indirect manner, to the remembrance of God.

Please explain, with the help of one or two examples—say, of going for a stroll or washing one's clothes—how one can both focus on the work one is doing and at the same time engage in God's dhikr or remember God at every moment while being engaged in the particular activity one is engaged in.

It is very simple to remember God, and also quite natural. For instance, when you are walking, you are doing so entirely because of the blessings of God. God is providing you sunlight; He is supplying you with oxygen and air. Also, it is He who has caused the gravitational attraction of the earth to enable you to walk, and so on. Without these divine blessings, you cannot walk on earth. If you realize these divine bounties and connect them with God, then you are remembering God. Similarly, when you are washing your clothes, it is due to divine blessings that you are able to do so. The water that you use is supplied by God, the cotton that makes up your clothes, the soap through which you clean, etc., all

have been provided by God. If you reflect on these bounties of God and connect them with God, then you are remembering God.

Remembering God is not alien to your being. It is interwoven in your being like energy is. You and energy are separate, but in fact, both are the same. So, every moment there are bounties of God present around you. If you awaken in yourself this consciousness and connect what you see or experience with God, then you are remembering God.

Please explain the Prophet's way of *dhikr* of God. Was he engaged in this *dhikr* every moment of his life as a prophet? If so, then please explain how he did this continuous remembrance of God even while busy in so many tasks—e.g. *dawah*, teaching his Companions, spending time with his family, etc.

The Prophet's wife Aisha reports about the Prophet: The Prophet remembered God on every occasion. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*) The Prophet used to remember God on each occasion by making it a point of reference for God's remembrance. So, for the Prophet, *dhikrullah* and other tasks were not two separate activities. Rather, both were intermingled.

When it is said that we should make every occasion an occasion for remembering God, does that mean we must focus on the present—the present occasion—and then use that as a means to reflect on and thank and praise God?

Dhikr means living with divine consciousness. When you have attained this state of consciousness, every moment you will be in a state of *dhikr*, even though you may not be uttering any specific words.

Suppose I am going for a stroll. I try and keep my mind in the present, not allowing it to stray off into the past or the future. So, I focus on, say, my feet, thanking and praising God for my feet. I focus on the trees I see, praising God for them. I see the birds and I praise God for having created such beautiful beings. Is this also a means of making the occasions we face an opportunity to remember God? Is this a good method of *dhikr*?

Yes, this is the right way of *dhikrullah*.

Often, I find myself thinking of the past (mainly negative feelings, thoughts) and sometimes, the future, too. My mind is dragged away from the present. What are the teachings of Islam about this?

If I have had some negative experience in the past, when I recall it today, I convert it into an item of *shukr*, or thankfulness to God,

because God didn't let me stay on in that negative moment and made me reach a better situation today.

When one's mind is not engaged in any task and one is free, do you suggest any specific words or phrases that we should repeat in order to do dhikr of God?

When your feelings are moulded in the form of words, that is what constitutes *dhikr*. When your own divine feelings take expression in words, this is *dhikr*. These words could be in your mother tongue or the Arabic language. □



One principle of success in this world is to abandon one thing in favour of another.



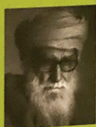
Reflections on *Life and Death*

What is the purpose of this short life of ours on earth when we know that one day or the other, death will overtake us and we will have to leave this world?

When the only thing about the future about which we can be really sure is that we will die one day, why is it that we rarely, if ever, care to think about death?

What happens after we die? When we die, the body begins to disintegrate, but what about the soul—the real 'I'?

In this book, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan reflects on life and death in the light of the grand Creation Plan of God. It is only in the context of this Plan, he suggests, that life and death can really begin to make sense.



MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN is the founder of Centre for Peace and Spirituality, New Delhi, an organisation dedicated to presenting Islam to the world as a complete ideology of peace. The Maulana is the author of *The Prophet of Peace*, *The Age of Peace*, *Islam and World Peace*, and numerous other best-selling books on Islam. He has been internationally recognized for his contributions to world peace.

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Reflections on *Life and Death*

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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