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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



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is like nurturing an orchard.**

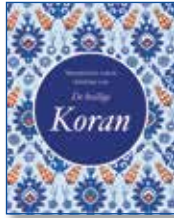
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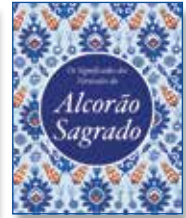
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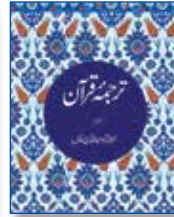
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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

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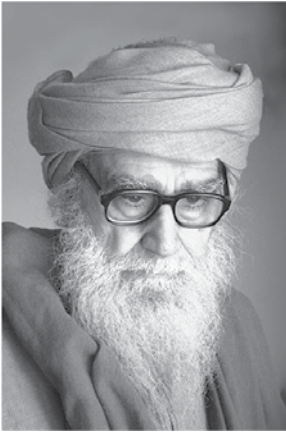
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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 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.

WELCOMING THE 71ST INDEPENDENCE DAY

THE British rule lasted in India for about 200 years. India's freedom struggle was launched in 1857, but in 1919 after the Jallianwala Bagh incident, it received a further boost under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. This movement proved successful and on the night of 15 August 1947 at 12:01 a.m., the Viceroy of India Lord Mountbatten announced on All India Radio: "Today India is free". On that day the Union Jack was taken down from Parliament House and the Indian flag was raised in its place.

I was born on 1 January 1925. My family was involved in the freedom struggle since its inception and so I too became a freedom fighter from my youth. Listening to elders, I began to cherish the golden dream of seeing a free India and harboured great hopes of becoming the citizen of a free country.

When India was declared free on 15 August 1947, I was in the city of Azamgarh with my family. I remember, on that night, people in their jubilation celebrated the newfound freedom by lighting up the entire city. I stepped out of my home and reached the downtown area of the

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

city. Walking on the streets of Azamgarh, my condition at that moment can be rightly described by these Hindi lines: *Khushi se paon zameen par nahin padh rahe the.* (My happiness lifted my feet off the ground!)

When I woke up the next morning, all the lights of the city had faded. They have not been lighted up again because the joy that people had expected to arrive in their lives after Independence was missing.

Now I am over 90 years of age, and I am still waiting for the India that I have been dreaming of since my younger days. I have since given much thought to this matter. My opinion is that before Independence we had successfully set in motion a movement for gaining freedom in the Gandhian style, but we were unable to initiate the movement that was desired after Independence.

On 8 August 1942, Indian leaders advanced the political slogan of 'Quit India', which was successfully realized on 15 August 1947. The slogan we were required to work towards after Independence was 'Build India'. However, as a senior citizen of our country, my feelings are that perhaps the second phase of our struggle was not set forth in the right

In life it often happens that individuals or nations are unable to avail of the first chance. This is why they have to plan again for a second time.

direction. Instead of 'Build India', our leaders adopted the formula of 'Rule India', which was like putting the cart before the horse. In other words, most of our rulers aimed to simply become rulers of India instead of expending their energies in working towards building our country.

In this matter, I consider the American model very suitable. At one time America too was a British colony. It gained its freedom in 1776. The plan made by the Founding Fathers of America to realize the American dream was

centred on three points: education, infrastructure and a competition-based economy. As everyone knows, this planning of the American leaders bore fruit and their nation became the superpower of the world. Had India emulated the American model of development, it too would have reached the position of a global power. Indian leaders, however, did not pattern their country's development on the model set by America, and instead chose to adopt the socialist model.

In the present circumstances, we may not be in a state to pursue the American model. The option before us at this juncture is to draw lessons from the French statesman Charles De Gaulle, who served as President of France from 1959 to 1969. The example he set involved

making radical changes towards making France a strong state, while taking the risk that he may not get elected for a second term.

In life it often happens that individuals or nations are unable to avail of the first chance. This is why they have to plan again for a second time. This is what happened with France: it was not able to avail of the first chance, as its leaders realized that they had been left far behind in the age of nuclear science. Then they engaged in re-planning, which was successful and France again became a powerful country of Europe. But the price of this re-planning was that when Charles De Gaulle died on 9 November 1970, he had lost his former popularity and very few people came to mark his funeral.

De Gaulle suffered a personal setback, but France emerged with a stronger economy and an independent nuclear capability as the most powerful nation of Europe. This is a good example for India to emulate and with sound re-planning, we too can become a strong nation amongst the nations of the world. □

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

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Peace is the Only Religion

Peace is the only religion for both man and the universe. In a peaceful environment all good things are possible, whereas in the absence of peace, we cannot achieve anything of a positive nature, either as individuals, or as a community. The same holds true at national and international levels.

ISLAM'S COMMITMENT TO NATION-BUILDING

Islam As It Is

OUR country India has been the land of opportunities in every way. Opportunities for education, businesses, ownership of properties, employment and every other facility has been available to all to make use of and to progress in life. Places of worship, religious organizations, schools and colleges run exclusively by particular communities for their own communities are thriving all over the country. One cannot ignore this reality by citing few stray negative incidents.

Islam's teaching with regard to unpleasant incidents should be seen in the backdrop of the entire creation plan of God. According to the creation plan of God, the present world is only a small part of our eternal life. It is meant as a ground for our personality development, so that we can make ourselves deserving inhabitants for the eternal world of Paradise. It is a personality development workshop for those who freely and willingly want to develop themselves to be worthy of God's Paradise.

Negative experiences or problems in life are actually challenges and opportunities for development. If every situation were to be smooth and easy, and every experience positive, one's personality would not flourish. For instance, unless one undergoes suffering, one will not be able to cultivate the virtue of patience. Similarly, if there were no rivers to cross, people would not have to build any bridges.

This world is a personality development workshop for those who freely and willingly want to develop themselves to be worthy of God's Paradise.

God has given man freedom of action as part of His creation plan. God does not desire us to live as mechanical beings; He wants us to be thinking and conscientious beings. Freedom has been bestowed on man so that he can utilize his talents towards developing creativity and achieving progress. God wants us to turn towards Him of our own free will.

However, where there is freedom, there is also the chance of misuse of freedom. Each time a person misuses his freedom it results in a negative situation for others who may be associated with him. Many challenges thus arise due to the misuse of freedom.

Negative incidents should not be looked at as a personal attack on oneself. The true believer is expected to give a positive response to negative situations by way of wise management. Here, managing a situation means avoiding reaction and taking the right actions after due consideration. It refers to looking at the situation objectively without prejudice. This is possible only for a person who is free of all complexes.

We can easily understand this point if we observe that people of the same community also have problems with each other. It is not that problems exist only between people of two different communities. Two brothers can also become enemies to each other. Problems and challenges can thus arise from anywhere and anyone, and are a part of our life in this world.

Taking life with a positive mindset, we can find guidance in Islam for nation-building. According to the Quran, every prophet of God addressed people of the entire nation, not only members of his own community. The Quran specifically mentions several prophets, all of whom addressed their respective nations as, 'O my people', and not specifically as, 'O my community'. The religion of these prophets' was based on monotheism, while the religious beliefs of the people they addressed were different. Despite this fact, the prophet's vision of their addressees was not determined by their religion. It was based on their common homeland. All prophets addressed them as, 'My people'.

The Quran says, *Lakum deenukum waliyadeen* which means, 'to each, his own religion'. (109: 6). This is the fundamental principle of secularism of our nation. The Prophet Muhammad too had set an example of this principle in Madinah when he issued a charter called *Sahifatul Madinah* (Madinah Declaration). According to this charter every citizen of Madinah had the freedom to follow his own religion.

Negative experiences or problems in life are actually challenges and opportunities for our development. If every situation were to be smooth and easy, and every experience positive, one's personality would not flourish.

Love of one's nation comes naturally to a human being. No one needs any instruction in this. What we must avoid is conditioning ourselves with wrong ideas, which may lead to negativity for our nation. We need to keep our natural feelings alive for the development of a national character.

What is national character? It is the capacity and the will to hold the interests of the nation supreme in every sphere. Whenever a nation has made any progress, it has been due to this spirit of nationalism. Without such a spirit, no nation can progress internally or externally. No personal gain of any kind and magnitude will ever make such a person

The true believer is expected to give a positive response to negative situations by way of wise management.

Managing a situation means avoiding reaction and taking the right actions after due consideration.

disloyal to his country. Activities like spying, giving away secrets of the country, helping the enemies of the country to perpetrate violent acts against the country are the most heinous crimes according to Islam. A true believer will know and strongly believe that such acts are going to make him deserving of God's punishment and deprive him of Paradise.

In his teachings, the Prophet of Islam laid the foundation of a duty conscious society, not a rights conscious society. The Prophet said, "A believer should be duty conscious and as far as his rights are concerned, he should ask of them from God." The best society is a duty conscious society. The duty of one person is the right of another. If each one of us took

care of our duties, the rights of all would be taken care of. But if each one of us were to be only demanding and protesting for the fulfillment of our rights, nothing would be accomplished. Performing one's duties instead of demanding rights, is the strongest foundation for building a prosperous nation.

Islam gives guidance even for situations where a country might have unjust rulers. In such circumstances the citizens are required not to rebel against the rulers. They must continue to obey their rulers and peacefully try to bring about a change in the mindset of the people, in the hope that once the term of the present ruler is over, capable people will come into power and rule in a just manner. Rebellion of any kind only leads to anarchy in society.

Unity is the greatest strength of a nation. Islam gives utmost importance to unity. It believes that unity must prevail in spite of differences and diversity. Differences are a part of nature. Nature abhors uniformity. We must remain united and live harmoniously while tolerating differences. We must agree to disagree and irrespective of individual beliefs, work together in harmony for the greater good.

According to Islam, every citizen must abide by the law of the land. For example, a particular institution might have regulations on uniform which might go against the religious dress code of a particular community. Here the person does not have any right to fight against the regulation. He has to choose between two options. Follow the rules if one is keen on being a part of the institution or give up the desire to be a part of it. This is the teaching of Islam. Life is a package deal of both pleasant and the unpleasant; one cannot create one's own package. We cannot pick and choose everything we desire in life.

A true believer—one who follows the pristine teachings of Islam—will be involved in progressive work for the neighbourhood, city, nation and humanity. It will be an unthinkable contradiction for him to be engaged in something harmful to society, not only to human society but also to the environment. The Prophet once remarked, "By God he is not a believer, he is not a believer, he is not a believer, whose neighbour is not safe from his evil."

Clarification of a Few Misconceptions

It would be relevant here to discuss a few issues regarding the attitudes of the people of a community which sometimes indicate to others that wherever they are in a minority they do not consider themselves as a part of the nation. What does Islam have to say about such attitudes?

Community Superiority

Is any particular community superior in the eyes of God? The Quran clearly mentions that no community is inherently superior to any other. (2: 62). God does not have a special relationship with any particular community. He has regard solely for a person's thoughts and deeds. In the Hereafter, people will be judged according to their deeds and character and not on the basis of the group or community to which they belong.

We can find guidance in Islam for nation-building. According to the Quran every prophet of God addressed the entire nation as, 'O my people', not as, 'O my community'.

Numerical Strength

Does being less in numbers mean that one can never progress in life? According to the Quran, a minority with the right attitude can contribute even more than the majority. We have examples before us where small communities have contributed positively to their nation and are also doing very well as a community. On this Indian soil of great

opportunities, their selfless service in the field of education, medical care, charities and development is exemplary. The Christians are a good example of this. They have been doing this work from the time when others had hardly started and in places where others feared to venture. They have welcomed everyone, irrespective of beliefs. People from all walks of life benefit from their services.

Religious Unity

Should everyone have the same religious beliefs in a country for it to progress? A few thinkers were of the opinion that religious unity had the power to bring about national progress. Religious unity implied that all religions were essentially one. It was believed that if this concept could take root in people's minds, it would produce a sense of unity all over the country. Historically speaking, of course, this assumption was proved wrong; there is a long, sorry record of even co-religionists

The Quran says, 'Lakum deenukum waliyadeen' which means, 'to each, his own religion'. This is the fundamental principle of secularism of our nation.

fighting fiercely among themselves. If the task of constructing the nation is to be successfully accomplished, we must rid ourselves of our obsession with such impracticable concepts as unity of religion and culture, and should forge ahead despite our differences.

The truth is that the only practicable basis of nationhood is patriotism. Our prime target should be the fostering of the spirit of patriotism amongst the people of our country.

The Quran (49: 13) says: 'Mankind! We have created you from a male and female, and made you into peoples and tribes, so that you might come to know each other.'

The term 'peoples' in this verse indicates groups that share a common homeland, while the term 'tribes' refers to groups based on racial commonality. According to the Quran, both types of grouping of people are simply for the sake of knowing each other, not for indicating relationships of belief or religion.

According to the Islamic perspective, religious unity is not the path for a nation's progress. At the same time, adherence to Islam does not clash with one's love for one's country. However, the behaviour of some Muslims gives this kind of impression to the world. The reason is that some Muslim thinkers have interpreted Islam in an extremist manner that brands all other systems as false. This notion of 'false systems' was

the product of some extremist minds. It does not have anything to do with Islam.

Based on the above notion, some Indian Muslim leaders declared nationalism to be un-Islamic. It is this wrong understanding which has led to such erroneous beliefs. Similarly some extremist Western thinkers of the early 20th century had expanded the notion of nationalism so much that they presented it in the form of a complete religion by itself. But when this notion had to contend with practical realities, it broke into smithereens.

From the aforementioned points, it is quite clear that Islam considers nationalism to be part of human nature.

Methodology as Presented by the Prophet's Teachings

It is individual temperament which plays the most crucial role in the making of a nation. It is important for nation-building in the same manner that individual bricks are important in the construction of a building.

The growth and development of a nation is a lengthy affair. There has to be a tremendous input at both the individual and national levels before it finally blooms and finds the position of honour and glory that it merits in world affairs. The work of nation building is like nurturing an orchard. If instead of nurturing the orchard with care and skill, people come out on to the streets and launch a protest campaign in the name of trees, or gather in some open place or march through the streets shouting slogans about it, they will never possess even a single tree, far less own an orchard.

National character is the capacity and the will to hold the interests of the nation supreme in every sphere. Whenever a nation has made any progress, it has been due to this spirit of nationalism.

A nation cannot fortify itself by working miracles only in the field of politics. One can make impassioned speeches and attract great crowds. But real results can be achieved only by long-term planning and unflagging dedicated effort. Needless to say, the two great virtues which are indispensable in the struggle are patience and fortitude. These two virtues are promised the highest rewards by Islam, as can be seen in the Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.

Conclusion

One might want to know our specific efforts towards the cause of nation building. With all humility we would like to say that under the guidance of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, our mentor who is well versed in both classical Islamic learning and modern disciplines, we are working towards promoting and reinforcing the culture of peace through mind-based spirituality and inter-faith efforts. Drawing inspiration from the Quran, and the *Sunnah*, the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, the Centre for peace and spirituality International, seeks to share the spiritual principles of Islam with the world and to reveal its true face, based as it is on peace, tolerance and co-existence.

The best society is a duty-conscious society. The duty of one person is the right of another. If each one of us took care of our duties, the rights of all would be taken care of.

We believe in self-introspection and towards contributing positively to the nation. We have dedicated ourselves single-mindedly towards building a better society. Our magazine *Spirit of Islam* is a step in this direction.

May God in His Infinite mercies grant us peace and security and help us to usher in an era of global brotherhood. □

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has congratulated noted Islamic scholar and peace activist Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, on being conferred the Sayyidina Imam Al Hassan Ibn Ali Peace Award at a function in Abu Dhabi.

“Congratulations to Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, on being conferred the Sayyidina Imam Al Hassan Ibn Ali Peace Award at a function in Abu Dhabi. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan’s knowledge and efforts towards peace make him one of the most respected scholars, admired all over”, the Prime Minister said. (30th April 2015)

THE POLITICAL INTERPRETATION OF ISLAM

A Most Fundamental Error

A VERSE in the Quran says: "All power belongs to God alone." (12: 40). The literal meaning of the Arabic word *hukm*, which appears in this verse, is "power" or "authority". In this verse, *hukm* is meant in the sense of God exercising control and authority over the universe. In other words, the verse asserts that it is God alone who has created the vast cosmos and it is He who is sustaining and regulating it. The above verse in the Quran thus speaks of a reality which is already manifest. Such an understanding of God inspires a human being to surrender himself completely to his Creator.

In present times, however, some Muslim thinkers have taken the word *hukm* in the above verse to mean political power or political authority. This interpretation entrusted Muslims with the responsibility of imposing God's political rule over the whole world. Since all people were not yet under Islamic or divine political rule, it became Muslims' primary duty to confront with those in possession of political power. Therefore their activities were directed at dethroning and replacing such rulers so that divine political rule could be established.

The truth is that the belief that God has control over everything requires a person to lead life in the spirit of modesty. Belief in a Creator who has absolute power over the world inspires a person to be extremely cautious in his words and deeds, taking care to always adhere to the path of justice in his conduct and dealings with others. Such a person will bear in mind that one day he will have to be accountable to God for all of his actions. Thus the idea of an all-powerful God is instrumental in cultivating noble and sublime virtues in a person.

But the political interpretation of the above verse caused Muslims to view themselves as political opponents of those in the position of power. Some Muslims took up the role of ideological opposition to people in authority, while others became involved in practical opposition to rulers whom they sought to dethrone. Such a movement of political opposition is tantamount to engaging in non-Islam in the name of Islam. An interpretation of this kind can only serve to take Muslims further away from Islam. Those Muslims who believe in the theory of imposing their political rule over others will have nothing but hatred and violence to give them. □

UTILIZE ANGER AS A BLESSING

Life Skill

ONCE a person said to the Prophet of Islam: "O Prophet, give me a master advice by which I may be able to manage all the affairs of my life." The Prophet simply replied: "Don't be angry." (Sahih al-Bukhari) It means: 'Don't be angry even when provoked.'

If someone keeps himself from becoming a victim of anger, then how can this habit become a master principle for his life? The moment of anger is a high moment in the life of a person. Anger is not just anger, it also creates brainstorming. Anger releases high energy in the angry person. It is a high moment for the individual concerned. If at this moment, he is able to divert this "anger energy" to the positive side, it will lead him towards healthy activities from negative activities. Anger is energy, and anger energy cannot be released in normal situations. An abnormal situation is required for unleashing it, for example when one becomes angry due to provocation.

Anger releases high energy in the angry person. It is a high moment for the individual concerned. If at this moment, he is able to divert this "anger energy" to the positive side, it will lead him towards healthy activities from negative activities.

Silence is a positive response when dealing with anger. The Prophet's teachings contain the importance of silence. Here are the exact words of a *Hadith* 'When you are angry, keep silence.' (*Musnad Ahmad*). How does silence help?

When you become angry due to some provocation, you should remain silent. Maintaining this silence will help in bringing about a change in the thinking process of the mind. This can be understood with the following analogy. There is a term used in driving called "shift time". It refers to the time interval between gear changes. Shift time changes the speed and direction of your car. So is the role of silence. Silence at the time of anger, shifts the direction of your thinking

from negativity to positivity.

At the time of anger, keeping silence is like changing gears of the mind. When a person is angry and he instantly becomes silent, the mind then takes a new pace. Instead of running to the negative side, it starts running in the positive direction and the result will be a well thought out action instead of a rash harmful reaction. □

PURIFICATION (TAZKIYA)

On the Road to Paradise

ACCORDING to the Quran, those people will gain entrance to Paradise who, while in this world, had purified themselves. For instance, the Quran says: "Successful is he who purified his soul." (91: 9). Elsewhere, the Quran says: "That is the recompense for those who purify themselves." (20: 76)

What is *tazkiya* or purification? One can understand this with the help of a *Hadith*. According to this *Hadith*, every person is born on an upright nature, but due to the influence of his environment he adopts an unnatural life. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*). This means that by birth every person has a purified personality or an upright nature, but because of the conditioning of his environment he becomes an artificial personality. In this context then, *tazkiya* or purification is for one to properly understand this problem and to de-condition himself and thereby make himself once again, a person on true nature. It is this personality that would be regarded as a purified personality.

By birth every person has a purified personality or an upright nature, but because of the conditioning of his environment he becomes an artificial personality.

De-conditioning is, in other words, the name for the process of self-correction. This task of self-correction or de-conditioning is not something that someone else can do for another. It is each one's own responsibility. The first duty of every person is to engage in introspection and carefully search out every notion that was not present in them by birth but that later became part of their personality because of the conditioning of their environment. If one seriously engages in this sort of deconditioning oneself, one's natural personality will emerge, having been purified. This is the meaning of a purified personality. □



United we Stand

Those who are intellectually awakened have the power to convert their disunity into unity.

MORAL AND ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOCIETY

Harmonious Living

ALL major religions have two different aspects theology and the moral scheme. Theology means the set of beliefs or doctrinal base of a religion; in other words, the inner contents of a religion. Whereas, the moral scheme of a religion refers to its ethical system.

In terms of theology, there are differences between religions. For example, some religions have the monistic concept of God, while other religions believe in the monotheistic concept of God.

Differences of this kind have always been the subject of discussion among theologians, and no doubt they will continue to be so in future. But like other intellectual discussions about differences, these are basically confined to scholars, having nothing to do with the common people. Most people can live their daily lives without concerning themselves with, or without even knowing about these issues. These issues are the concern of a few individuals and not of the majority of any society.

In terms of theology, there are differences between religions. Differences invite discussion, lead to intellectual exchange and necessitate knowing more and more about one's own religion as well as the religion of others.

However, these differences are not simply matters about which people are at odds with each other; they also have a positive role to play. Differences invite discussion, lead to intellectual exchange and necessitate knowing more and more about one's own religion as well as the religion of others. Thus, differences in terms of results, lead to intellectual development and enhancing the level of thinking. They lead to overall development in religious disciplines. In fact, difference is not an unwanted evil; on the contrary, it is a great good. Difference has a positive role in religious studies.

The other aspect of any religion is its ethical system. That is, the standard of moral conduct. In this area, there is little difference between religions. Almost all the religions preach the same moral values to be followed in daily life.

There are two main branches of religions: the Aryan religions and the Semitic religions. A study of both branches of religions shows that in

terms of moral teachings, there are great similarities between them, and likewise with Islam. For example:

Mankind as one family

Islam teaches that all mankind is a single family. The Quran declares:

O mankind! Fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul.
He created its mate from it and from the two of them spread
countless men and women [throughout the earth]. (4: 1)

It means that all men and women share a common ancestor. That is, all men and women are brothers and sisters to one another. There is complete commonality between different races and groups of people. The Prophet of Islam declared:

Mankind is a divine family. (*Al-Baihaqi*)

The Prophet of Islam used to rise early in the morning and say after his morning prayer: "O God, I bear witness that all men and women are sisters and brothers to each other." (*Abu Daud*)

The above quoted teachings from Islamic scriptures are also found in other religions such as Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity etc. They provide the initial base of a good relationship between people. The best culture to emulate in this regard is the family culture where all its members inspite of their differences live with a sense of oneness.

Every religion has a standard of moral conduct. In this area, there is little difference between religions. Almost all the religions preach the same moral values to be followed in daily life.

This family culture is desirable on a global level among all nations and races. This kind of universal relationship is endorsed by almost all religions. There may be some differences in belief, but in terms of social life, every religious individual—irrespective of his personal traditions—should live in society just as he is living in his family.

Love and Compassion

There is a famous saying of Jesus Christ:

Love your enemy. (Luke 6: 35)

It means; love all, including your enemy. Likewise, the same teaching is to be found in the Quran. The Quran in one of its chapters gives the following guidance to its believers:

Good deeds and bad deeds are not equal. Do a good deed in return for a bad deed and you will see that your enemy has become your dearest friend. (41: 34)

Love or compassion is the greatest social value; it is the basis of all moral teachings or moral requirements. And it is also a fact that every religion aims to inculcate these values in its followers. If you study the various religions, you will find that all of them try to promote a 'culture of love' in society. To build a love-based society is the sole target of every religion. Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. The Prophet of Islam once said:

Do with others what you want others to do with you.
(*Sahih Muslim*)

The same maxim is to be found in Judaism. Rabbi Hillel the Elder is known to have said:

What is hateful (or hurtful) to you, do not do to any other man.
(*Talmud-Shabbat*)

A family culture is desirable on a global level among all nations and races. This kind of universal relationship is endorsed by almost all religions.

This is a universal teaching, given by every religion, in one form or the other. This religious teaching gives us a very simple criterion for living as a good member of society.

Everybody knows what is good for him and what is bad for him. Apply this personal experience to all other members of society. If everyone observes this formula of moral conduct, the whole of society will emerge as a good society. This common religious rule is the simplest approach for social construction.

Peace at any Cost

The Quran lays great emphasis on peace. For example, there is a verse in the Quran which says:

Reconciliation is the best. (4: 128)

That is, in the case of controversy, adopt the peaceful rather than the confrontational course of action. This concept has also been adopted by other religions as their basic teaching. For example, in Christianity the following verse of the New Testament:

Blessed are the peacemakers. (Matthew 5: 9)

It is a fact that peace is a common teaching of all the religions. It is also a fact that peace is the *summum bonum*; peace is the greatest good which leads to the building of a better society; without peace there is no development. Peace provides the environment in which every group can flourish without being harmful to others; peaceful living is the most important part of moral living.

Good Social Behaviour

Moral development is not simply a matter of individual conduct towards others. It is profoundly related to the development of an individual's personality. When one engages in good social behaviour, one is in the process of self-development. Good social behaviour is thus a great aid to the building of one's character. Good social behaviour means positive behaviour; and positive behaviour inculcates positive thinking making one a good human being.

Human society is based on a well-known maxim—give and take. When you give something to others you create a situation in which you certainly garner positive fruit in return. The relationship between an individual and society is one of interchange; both the partners give something to the other and receive something from others, so it is a reciprocal relationship.

Religion being intended to build a moral base for society, it is the duty of religious people to condition the minds of people on a moral basis and promote human-friendly behaviour among all members of society.

The establishment of a harmonious relationship between all the members of society is a common requirement of all religions. No religious activity can be carried out without normal social conditions. It is therefore, in the best interests of all religions for moral behaviour to be recognized as the greatest means of normalizing the relationship between different sections of a society and ensuring peaceable living conditions. So, in view of this, every religion teaches its members to adopt a good moral standard.

There are ample references in all religions that provide us with a good base for building a better society through partnership. This is the basic role of every religion. Without playing this role, religion becomes irrelevant to humanity.

The above commonalities amongst religions provide a base for the development of a harmonious society. However, in order to administer and regulate practical matters in society the role of a suitable political administration cannot be denied.

Different roles of Religion and Political Administration

Religion and political administration are the two basic instruments by which every society is regulated. Both have an important role. Religion being intended to build a moral base for society, it is the duty of religious people to train the minds of people on a moral basis. It is their duty to create an ethical atmosphere in society and to promote human-friendly behaviour among all members of society.

Love or compassion is the greatest social value; it is the basis of all moral teachings or moral requirements. And it is also a fact that this teaching is found in every religion.

Political rule has a basic regulatory function in the practical matters of a nation. It is put in place to maintain peace and harmony among the people, to ensure justice and to check crimes. No religious institution can play the role of political masters. And no political master—given the limitations of

political administration—can play the role of a religious institution. Both the institutions have their specific roles and both institutions are complementary to each other. It is the complementary roles of these two institutions that ensures building of a better society. □



Reform of Society

To bring about real change in society we will have to first change individual minds.

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.



DECEPTION (DAJJALIYAT)

DAJJALIYAT (Deception) is no mysterious word. Rather, it is the name for a known fact. In the words of the Quran (6:43), *dajjalīyat* can be defined as ‘the beautification of wrong deeds’. Briefly, it is to express something in such a deceptive manner that the listeners are led to consider something that is wrong to be right. This art of excelling in beautifying wrong ideas or deeds is *dajjalīyat*.

For example, in the present-day, some Muslims are engaged in suicide-bombing. In order to seek to pass off this action as legitimate, they say that when the community is faced with great danger, suicide-bombing is permissible in order to save the community. They cite the instance of the Japanese, who resorted to suicide attacks against America during the Second World War. But this reasoning is based on a fallacy, because through *hara-kiri*, the Japanese nation could not be saved from their enemy. Rather, in the war, Japan suffered a miserable defeat. After this, the Japanese abandoned this method, and instead, adopted peaceful means for their community’s progress, which turned out to be very successful.

Dajjalīyat is to express something in such a deceptive manner that the listeners are led to consider something that is wrong to be right.

Likewise, in the present-day, some Muslims have adopted violent methods against their supposed enemies. Because of this, they are called terrorists. But they argue that what they are doing is not terrorism

but, rather, terrorizing of “oppressors”. They claim that this is just the same as what the police in some countries do—to break the resolve of criminals, they sometimes terrorize them. And so, they argue, just as this method is considered to be proper for the police, it is proper for the Muslims, too. They also claim that people who call Muslims as terrorists are guilty of double-standards. If freedom fighters are not termed terrorists but heroes, in the same way, they insist, Muslims too, should not be called terrorists, but rather, crusaders for justice.

This wrong logic is used by some Muslims to seek to justify suicide-bombing. They claim that this action is impelled by the desire to seek martyrdom, or *shahadat*.

These arguments are all based on a great misunderstanding. *Shahadat* is an Islamic term. Nowhere in the Quran and *Hadith* is it said that the believers must kill themselves and become *shaheeds*, or martyrs. In Islam, there is no teaching that enjoins the believers to perform such acts so that they are labelled ‘martyrs’. Rather, if believers die while performing a lawful act they may be called ‘martyrs’.

Deception through beautification of wrong actions has always been present in this world. In a *Hadith* it is said that in later times, a great deceiver (*Dajjal*) will arise. This does not mean that the deceiver will be huge in the physical sense. Rather, it means that the deception of the deceiver will happen in an age that will offer the deceiver many tools on a large scale for the ease of his task.

For instance, in a *Hadith* of the Prophet, it is said that *Dajjal* will speak with a voice which will be heard between the East and the West. (*Kanz al-Ummal*). This does not mean that the *Dajjal* will be some giant personality. Rather, what it means is that those who will be engaged in deceiving people will appear in such a time when the age of global communications will have arrived and that they will use the means available in their time in order to make their ideas and thoughts reach far and wide.

In another *Hadith*, it is said the word *kufr* will be written on *Dajjal*'s forehead. (*Sahih Muslim*). This means that, although the *Dajjal* will present his misleading thoughts in a manner that make them seem fair, those who are firmly on the truth will be able to recognize the deception and will be saved from going astray. □



WORKING YOUR WAY UP

Natural Process

A MAN entered a certain recruiting office and said, "I want to join as a soldier." "But how old are you?" the sergeant asked. "Sixty," was the man's reply. "You know quite well that sixty is too old for you to become a soldier." "All right, if sixty is too old for a soldier, don't you need any generals?" retorted the man.

If one wants to start a career as a general, one will be hard put to do so. It's just like a race where one can't leap straight from the starting point to the finishing line. To succeed in anything, we have to be like the tree, starting from the seed, growing slowly and putting out branches, twigs, leaves and flowers when the appropriate times come around. Similarly, business starts with investing money, not with earning profits. The construction of a house starts with the foundation and not with the roof.

Congregational matters are very much on a parallel. They begin from the inculcation in individuals of a sense of purpose and an understanding of the importance of hard work, honesty, endurance and unity. Not until the individuals of a nation are imbued with these important ideals to a high degree can measures be taken for the advancement of the cause. If we ignore the importance of preconditioning, our missionary ventures are bound to end in failure. Any attempt to launch a movement without a solid, national infrastructure would be like trying to roof a house without raising its walls. A roof put up in this way is bound to collapse on one's head. In much the same way, any steps taken before individuals have been properly prepared will inevitably lead to failure and chaos, even death and destruction. □

Not until the individuals of a nation are imbued with a sense of purpose and an understanding of the importance of hard work, honesty, endurance and unity, can measures be taken for the advancement of the nation.



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



CONVERSION TO GOD

THE sun is nature's laboratory, in which atomic reaction converts matter into energy and light. Cows are a living laboratory in which grass is converted into milk. Trees are also a laboratory of nature, which take in water, minerals and gases and convert them into blossoms and fruits.

God requires man to undergo the same process of conversion as the sun, trees and animals undergo with such perfection. But there is one difference: in other things, conversion is an instinctive process, whereas in man it is a conscious one; in other things conversion occurs on a material plane, whereas in man it occurs on a spiritual plane.

The Creator of the universe requires us to see His reflection in the mirror of His creation. Facts may enter our minds as information, but we should convert this information into knowledge of God.

Normally, we just observe the outside world, but we should do more than just observe. The Creator of the universe requires us to see His reflection in the mirror of His creation. Facts may enter our minds as information, but we should convert this information into knowledge of God. When we are successful in

this world, we should attribute our success wholly to God. When we fail we should, through our failure, acknowledge our helplessness. When we have cause for complaint against somebody, our inner mechanism should convert resentment into forgiveness and pardon.

A land which converts earth into trees is fertile; a land which does not do so is sterile. So it is with man. Whoever is able to awaken his inner mechanism in such a way that it begins to convert raw matter into sublime matter is a person who can look forward to heaven when he comes before God and the one who does not do so will be deprived of this blessing. □



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THERE IS A REASON BEHIND EVERYTHING

Matter of Understanding

I*F only this had not happened at this particular time.* These words speak of a feeling of apprehension in the mind of a person. Certain sets of circumstances come into being at the exact points in time allotted to them by God.

How often have we heard people say things like, "If only we had thought of this before," or "If only we had postponed our journey," or "if only this had not happened at this particular time," or even, "If only we could have lived in a different century!" All these statements betoken a feeling of unease or distress at a sequence of events which we feel might have been different. This is often a pointless exercise and should not be a cause for worry.

We think things such as, "If we had postponed our journey, we wouldn't have had an accident". "If we lived in the next century, life might be more comfortable than it is now", etc.

Things, we feel, could have been better ordered in terms of our own personal destinies. But, recorded in the sayings of the Prophet, we find these portentous words of God: "Do not speak ill of Time, for I am Time, all is in My Hand; I make the night and the day succeed one another."

This profound and awesome statement leaves us in no doubt that everything which takes place in the world does so according to the law laid down by God.

Just as the passage of time, and events in nature, conform to this law, so do certain sets of circumstances come into being at the exact points in time allotted to them by God.

To rail against this system and to wish that the order of events could be different, is nothing short of speaking ill of God's law and amounts to an act of being disobedient to God. Why then must one indulge in such a pointless exercise?

Instead one should convert the incident as a stepping stone to introspection and analyze the situation to see what best can be done to overcome its ill effects and to proceed in life with better planning. In brief, one should concentrate on giving the right response to each situation. □

WORKING IN UNISON

Teamwork

AMERICAN shipbuilders take sixteen months to complete a 50-thousand ton tanker. The Spaniards take even longer to produce a ship of similar tonnage—24 months. But Japanese shipbuilders do the job in just eight months.

What is the secret of this Japanese miracle? A survey conducted by Western experts shows that the deciding factor is teamwork. Japanese workers and management function together in complete unison. At no stage during the work processes is this bond disrupted. The result is the production of high quality goods within an amazingly short time.

Group harmony is something, which is part of the whole fabric of Japanese culture and work methods. Whether in the home or in the factory, in large institutions or small, the will to be co-operative manifests itself as the truly distinctive feature of the Japanese character. William Ouchi, an expert in Japanology writes: "Every activity in Japan is group activity and not a springboard to individual glory and personal advertisement."

It is to this speciality that Japan's greatest secret of national progress can be traced. The willingness of large numbers of people to work together with good grace is a prerequisite for success in any venture. The only flaw in this system of joint effort is that the personality of the individual has little opportunity to flourish. But it is only a nation which is made up of individuals who are prepared to make this personal sacrifice which can ever aspire to success. Where individuals keep pulling in opposite directions, no substantial progress can even be made at the national level.

When work is co-operative in spirit, well co-ordinated in organization and an atmosphere of harmony prevails, the sky is the limit in quality and quantity of production. It is unity then which is the true key to organizational success. □

When work is co-operative in spirit, well co-ordinated in organization and an atmosphere of harmony prevails, the sky is the limit in quality and quantity of production.



TOWARDS AN ADVANCED NATION

Result Oriented Work

INDIA, officially the Republic of India, is a country in South Asia. It is the seventh-largest country by area, the second-most populous country (with 1.34 billion people), and the most populous democracy in the world. It is bounded by the Indian Ocean on the south, the Arabian Sea on the southwest, and the Bay of Bengal on the southeast. It shares land borders with Pakistan to the west; China, Nepal, and Bhutan to the northeast; and Myanmar (Burma) and Bangladesh to the east. In the Indian Ocean, India is in the vicinity of Sri Lanka and the Maldives. India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands share a maritime border with Thailand and Indonesia.

India has become one of the fastest growing major economies and is considered a newly industrialized country. It consists of 29 states and 7 union territories. It is a pluralistic, multilingual and multi-ethnic society.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan shares his wisdom regarding a few of the challenges faced by the citizens of this country and hopes that if we all work together in unity in spite of our differences we could be an advanced nation.

The Solution to Corruption

Every Indian complains about corruption, but no one tries to get to the root cause of this phenomenon. The Gandhian movement in the first half of the twentieth century was, in a sense, an anti-corruption movement. In the mid 1970's Jayprakash Narayan's 'total revolution' was a strong movement against corruption. Then followed V.P. Singh's movement in the late 1980's and the fourth in this sequence was Anna Hazare's movement in August 2011. The criterion to judge the success of these movements is not the crowds they draw, but the results they produce. It is an undeniable fact that in terms of results, all these previous movements completely failed to achieve their declared goal.

*The pursuit of wealth
will only lead to
discontentment,
while the pursuit of
wisdom will always
lead to contentment.
Only the content can
abandon corrupt
practices.*

All these anti-corruption movements made their demands from the system. But it is not the system that is responsible for corruption; it is the human mind.

To eradicate the corruption we see today, we need to re-engineer individual minds. This requires a spiritual campaign. We need to replace the money-oriented mind with a value-oriented mind. We need to make people believe that money is a need, and not a goal. People's concern for the self needs to be replaced with concern for the nation.

To eradicate corruption, we have to give individuals a goal greater than money, just as to shorten a line, you only need to draw a longer line next to it. In the same way, to eradicate corruption, we should have a higher goal of intellectual or spiritual development. In other words, we have to replace money as a goal with wisdom as a goal. Although it is a long process, it is nevertheless the only process that can produce results. There are no shortcuts.

To eradicate the corruption we see today, we need to re-engineer individual minds. This requires a spiritual campaign.

Anti-corruption movements generally demand the enactment of anti-corruption laws. We already have anti-corruption laws. But these laws have obviously failed to eradicate corruption. Why? Because without implementation, laws are just words on paper. Laws can only be implemented by people. These people have to be persons who are not corrupt and who possess full authority. People such as these are the rarest of the rare; they seem to be non-existent. Had such people existed, the laws we have would have been sufficient.

The pursuit of wealth will only lead to discontentment, while the pursuit of wisdom will always lead to contentment. Only the content can abandon corrupt practices. To achieve this goal, we have to address individual minds, not attract crowds. A spiritual revolution cannot be brought about by a mob.

And, it is only a spiritual revolution that can root out corruption in our country.

Expectations from Media as a Tool of Social Reform

It is said that media is a powerful tool for ushering in social reform. It is certainly true that the media has achieved the status of the greatest industry; it is present in every home, big or small. But there is no social reform. Everyone complains about the deterioration in human and social values. Why this failure of media in bringing about social reform? In spite of great expansion, the media has had little positive effect on our present society.

The reason lies in the very nature of media. The subject of media is to write instant history; it has no interest in the past or the future. The sole focus here is what is going on in the present. Due to this nature of media, it has failed to bring about any positive change in society.

Thinking about the past means taking lessons from previous experiences. The past is full of experiences and every experience has a lesson; but when we are not interested in the study of the past, we deprive ourselves from such lessons, and thus from reassessing our lives.

Dialogue is not a meeting of rivalry but is a brotherly meeting. Such noble tasks are performed by rising above the victory-defeat psychology.

On the other hand, the future means thinking about tomorrow. The best planning is only one that is future-oriented, but the media has no interest about future events either.

In such a situation, the media simply becomes a source of intellectual enjoyment on a daily basis. One who is engaged in it—both, in print and electronic forms—can only think about the present and their formula of life becomes, ‘right here, right now’. This state of mind makes them self-centred; they cannot think

about social values. Social betterment needs a mind that is socially-oriented, but people of the above kind live with a self-oriented mind, and such people cannot play any role in social reform.

Another aspect of media is that it is not a mission; media is an industry. This nature of media makes it unsuitable for playing any role in terms of social reform. Social reform is a mission, it cannot be a business. And media, being an industry, like any other business organization cannot play a significant role in terms of social reform. This is not a value judgement about media; it is simply an objective assessment.

A Good Society

A good society is the cherished ideal of every human soul. But a consensus has yet to emerge on what constitutes a good society. This is undoubtedly one of the most complex questions facing man today.

It would be no exaggeration to say that three major initiatives, designed in their separate ways to offer a solution, have been utter failures. A hundred years ago it was generally assumed that the setting up of a national government would provide the answer. It was felt that foreign rule was responsible for the rot that had set in society, and

that indigenous rule alone could set matters right. In 1947, we finally succeeded in establishing a national government, but it failed to yield the desired result of a good society.

Similarly, the initiative which led up to 'Home Rule', i.e. the non-violent movement started seventy-five years ago by Mahatma Gandhi, did not usher in any utopian ideal. It had come to be assumed that once the principle of non-violence became the mainstay of Indian politics, it would automatically be put into practice in society. But this transference of a principle from the political to the social sphere did not take place. We may have been successful in launching a political movement based on non-violence, but we were to find that it took more than earnest enunciation of the principle of non-violence to build a good society.

Our basic shortcoming is to think purely in terms of systems. This has caused us to devote all our attention to overall 'social reform', at the expense of the more worthwhile 'reform of individuals'.

The third initiative, carried out after independence, was the attempt to bring about a good society by legislation. There are now scores of laws aimed at social reform, each social evil having several specially framed laws to counteract them. But this multitude of laws has done little to bring a good society into existence.

As seen, our basic shortcoming is to think purely in terms of systems. This has caused us to devote all our attention to overall 'social reform', at the expense of the more worthwhile 'reform of individuals'. Over a period of a hundred years, all the major movements launched in our country have been system-based, rather than individual-based.

The individual is the primary unit of society. If individuals are reformed, society follows suit. And if individuals degenerate, society too goes into decline. That is why our best efforts should centre on the individual, who is, after all, the basic building block of society. The day we reform individuals in their thousands, we shall have set ourselves well and truly on the path of successful social reform.

The solution to our problems lies in inter-community meeting, instead of protests and demand meetings with the government. The most urgent need of today is to hold inter-community dialogues at a national level. Serious-minded and influential people from all communities should participate in these interactions. Their goal should be the securing of peace on the basis of purely non-political grounds.

Representatives of all communities should hold discussions with open hearts. They must strive to put an end to controversial situations on all sides and should discover a common basis by adopting which, all communities can live together as good neighbours.

A dialogue of this kind is exactly in accordance with the Islamic *Shariah*. The Hudaibiya peace treaty in Islamic history is an instance of a successful dialogue of this nature. After the Prophet's emigration, relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in Arabia considerably deteriorated. A number of battles and skirmishes ensued, and walls of prejudice and hatred barred them from coming closer to each other. Finally, peace could only be established at Hudaibiya near Makkah in 628 AD, through peaceful negotiations between the Prophet Muhammad and the non-Muslim Makkan leaders.

If such a dialogue is held with full justice and sincerity, a new chapter will be opened in the history of India. It is this point of inter-community relationship where the history of India is standing still. Once this problem is solved and relations between communities improve, nothing else will come in the way of India's progress.

The dialogue, if it has to succeed, should not take the form of polemics. Representatives should not become spokesmen of their respective communities during the discussion. What should be uppermost in their minds are the larger national interest and the paths of progress and harmony for all.

All parties must commit themselves to differentiating between issues and non-issues, so that they will not hold anything as a matter of prestige; that they will not adopt the way of claim and counter-claim; that they will speak only with a vision of the result before them; that their way will be one of impartiality; that while pressing their demands, they will also be willing to concede; that while taking from others, they will also be willing to give.

Dialogue is not a meeting of rivalry but is a brotherly meeting. Such noble tasks are performed by rising above the victory-defeat psychology. Its aim is to solve matters and not confound them. The feeling at work behind a dialogue is one of reconciliation and not one of rivalry.

Dialogue means, an attempt to solve controversial matters through negotiation; rather than, through confrontation. If a dialogue is started with this spirit, its success is certain. The door to the progress of our country has been shut for about half-a-century; and a dialogue keeping this spirit in view, can surely open the closed door, provided it is conducted with true spirit. □

THE KHAWARIJ

Extremist Mindset

A QUESTION often asked with respect to the *Khawarij* is: "If one thinks of sensitivity for right and wrong and discipline in adhering to God's commands, the case of the *Khawarij* comes to mind. Then why were they removed from the mainstream of Islam? Was it because while being strictly observant of God's commands themselves, they also believed in stringently making others follow religious injunctions? What is the correct interpretation of the matter?"

The *Kharijyat* sect emerged in the first century of the *Hijri* calendar, which was the period of the caliphate of Ali (656-661 AD). Initially, these people had sided with Caliph Ali, but later they developed differences with him and parted ways. This is why they are called *Khawarij*, meaning "those who walked out", or "those who left".

People who belong to this sect call themselves *al-Sharah*, which means those who sell themselves for the sake of God's religion. Members of this sect identify themselves with a group of people referred to in the Quran as *A'rab* (49: 14). These were illiterate people whose way of life was marked by extremism. Today such people will be defined as radicalized Muslims. They were contemporaries of the Prophet who had entered Muslim society by reciting the Islamic creed, however, they had not undergone proper training in religion. This is why they still possessed the pre-Islamic extremist mindset. They would excommunicate people for minor differences.

Any person who expressed dissent from their extremist beliefs was held worthy of being killed. For example, the *Khawarij* had declared that Caliph Ali be executed because in the matter of resolving his differences with Muawiyah he had chosen to accept an arbitrator, while the *Khawarij* believed that he should have instead consulted the Quran, the Book of God for decision.

It would not be right to say that the *Khawarij* were sensitive in matters of religion. Being sensitive is proper if it keeps one peaceful, but if one's sensitivity leads one to assume that one's opponent is worthy of being killed then such sensitivity would be appropriately described

Extremist tendencies begin to appear as harmless ideas, but after some time they assume dangerous proportions. This is why in Islam extremism that leads to violence is considered extremely abhorrent.

as undesirable extremism. Those who are sensitive in this sense have actually developed a self-styled version of Islam, for which they have no right.

The *Khawarij* were the first sect among Muslims which brought in the concept of “thought crime” in Islam. Those who believe in such extremist views cannot be regarded as being sensitive in religious matters, instead their case is of those who make alterations in God’s religion. If these people keep their ideas to themselves, then they should be left alone. However, if they promote their extremist ideas and issue death verdicts on their opponents, then according to Islam, they would be viewed as criminals.

The *Khawarij* sect originated over political differences. In the later history of Islam when Muslims had acquired political power, differences also arose between various groups among Muslims. These differences were originally only differing viewpoints. An example is the case of Sad ibn Ubadah, who differed with Caliph Abu Bakr on a matter. Despite holding a divergent opinion from the Caliph, he did not protest and remained peaceful. But later the differences among Muslims became so intense that people began to engage in confrontation with each other. In this period, in order to lend credence to their respective viewpoints, each group attempted to Islamize their particular ideas and notions. That is, every faction tried to prove its opinions right by seeking legitimacy and justification in Islamic teaching.

As a result, the phenomenon of sectarian extremism emerged among Muslims. There were several instances of extremism exhibited by various groups. Extremist tendencies begin to appear as harmless ideas, but after some time they assume dangerous proportions. The entire Muslim society became marred with evils such as anarchy, hatred and civil war. This is why in Islam extremism that leads to violence is considered extremely abhorrent. If those who believe in such extremist views begin to give practical shape to their ideas, then an established state has the right to enter into peaceful negotiations with the extremists, as was done by the Caliph Umar ibn Abdul Aziz. However, if these people do not desist, then the government has the power to initiate strict proceedings against such groups to put an end to their destructive activities.

In present times, those who have raised political power to the status of religious belief are the *Khawarij* of the modern age. □



NECESSARY PREPARATION

Sincerity of Purpose

GANDHI is a famous biographical film, released in 1982. It is based on the life of Mahatma Gandhi. The character of Gandhiji has been played by the English actor Ben Kingsley.

It is said that Kingsley had to experience great rigour in the process of the preparations of moulding himself in Gandhiji's character. For the proper portrayal of the role of Gandhiji, he observed partial starvation for a long time.

Kingsley had a plump body, while Gandhiji was a man with a thin frame who would often walk holding a stick in his hand for support. It was therefore important that when Kingsley came on screen, he should appear to the audience, slender in build just like the real Gandhi. For this reason, before the making of the movie Kingsley would often eat less or remain hungry in order that he could look slim. As a result, he was able to reduce his weight by seven kilograms. The Indian actress Rohini Hattangadi who starred in the movie as Gandhi's wife, Kasturba Gandhi, also had to adhere to a similar demanding and harsh lifestyle prior to playing her role.

Those who shoulder the responsibility of guiding their community without equipping themselves adequately are committing a grave mistake.

To enact the role of a fictional character in a movie is much less difficult than to perform the task of a leader who has to guide his nation in real life. In spite of the enormity of this task, it is very strange that when it comes to the responsibility of guiding their community, people make haste to plunge into the field without any preparation at all.

Training and instructing of one's people is undoubtedly one of the most challenging of duties. To portray himself as Gandhi in a film, Kingsley had to subject his body to hardship, but to play the role of a leader of a nation, one has to subject one's own being to adversity. For the former role, an actor may have to reduce the size of his physical body, but for the latter role a person has to cut his real self down to size.

Those who shoulder the responsibility of guiding their community without equipping themselves adequately are committing a grave mistake. □

CONCEALING OTHERS' FAULTS

Sign of Good Character

ACCORDING to a *Hadith*, the Prophet Muhammad has said: "For whoever conceals the faults of another, God will conceal his faults in this world and the Hereafter." (*Sunan Ibn Majah*)

This *Hadith* forbids using someone's faults in order to defame the person. It forbids talking about a person's faults to unrelated people in order to spoil the image. On the other hand, helping someone improve or reform is the duty of every person of faith. As another *Hadith* says: "A believer is like a mirror for another believer." (*Sunan Abu Dawud*). It means that if a person has a certain fault or shortcoming, one should tell him about it in a compassionate manner.

If you see or hear about a fault in someone, you could do one of two things. You could keep this fact in your heart and not speak about it to anyone. Or, you could meet this person yourself, and in a spirit of compassion and genuine concern for reform, speak to the person about it. This method helps promote positivity, in individuals and in the society at large.

If you go about trying to find faults in others and gossip about them, it is tantamount to what is called 'character assassination'.

As opposed to this, if you go about trying to find faults in others and gossip about them, it is tantamount to what is called 'character assassination'.

If you have differences with somebody, you could respond to the person by providing evidences to support your stance. But to pick on personal faults and defame the person amongst other people is wrong and hypocritical. □



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INTELLECTUAL CRUSADES

For a Better Society

WHAT has gone wrong with India? Before Independence, everyone had high hopes of freedom, but now they feel that something more is required to fulfil their dreams. Our most pressing need is to discover this missing element and re-plan our strategy accordingly. This is the most urgent task before us.

The genesis of the problem is that we failed to differentiate between pre-Independence and post-Independence India. The failure in recognizing this situation is the basic cause of all our problems. We are the victims not of any kind of internal or external conspiracy but of our own misguided planning.

In pre-Independence India our struggle was based on our political rights rather than on our social duties. The whole struggle was centred on rights-activism. This strategy made the whole society a rights-conscious society, while a better society is one whose members are duty-conscious.

In the pre-Independence period, the equation was between Indians and foreign occupiers. At that time, rights-based action seemed to be a valid form of activism and therefore, it worked naturally. But in the post-Independence period, the equation was between Indians and Indians. Now it has become essential to change our strategy from being rights-based to being duty-based. But, in this regard, we have failed completely. No single movement has produced duty-conscious people. The Constitution of India was drafted by India's best brains. When it came into effect all its clauses were about rights: no single clause referred to duties.

In pre-Independence India our struggle was centred on rights-activism. This strategy made the whole society a rights-conscious society, while a better society is one whose members are duty-conscious.

There is no use in blaming others; it is better to blame ourselves. Now is the time to launch a new struggle, under the banner of 'intellectual crusades'. By intellectual crusades, I mean educational crusades, not in terms of formal education but in the sense of informal education.

Formal education is not going to help us with this, because it is totally based on professionalism. Anyone who seeks formal education

knows that this is the age of professionalism and that he should gain professional qualification to secure a place in the job market. The whole structure of formal education is based on the concept of making oneself qualified for the professional market, rather than on making oneself a good member of society. To build a better society in India, we need a parallel intellectual campaign. It is this campaign that I have termed 'intellectual crusades'.

If you ask me about the model of intellectual crusades, I would say that I have dedicated myself single-mindedly to this very task. We use various means of communication for this purpose, such as the print and electronic media, conferences, seminars and other places of intellectual activity.

I would like to share an incident here that illustrates my way of working. Once, when I was at Geneva airport, I met an Indian woman. She had been working on a cultural project for two months and was now returning to India. While sharing her experiences in Switzerland, she immediately took to complaining. I intervened and politely said that in spite of our best efforts situations do occur in life that lead to negative experiences. At such times instead of responding negatively we must follow the 'cow culture'. You consider the cow a sacred animal in the ritual sense. But you have to follow the cow culture in your real life. The cow is a natural 'industry' which converts what is non-milk into milk. This is a demonstration by nature telling humans to adopt the cow culture by converting negativity into positivity. She instantly understood this concept and said that she would abandon the complaint culture and maintain positive thinking in every situation.

'Intellectual crusades' means giving an intellectual dose to people at every opportunity, which makes them better human beings, and consequently better members of society.

So 'intellectual crusades' means giving an intellectual dose to people at every opportunity, which makes them better human beings, and consequently better members of society. □



CLOSE-MINDEDNESS

Un-Islamic Practice

ACCORDING to a tradition, the Prophet of Islam once remarked: "The remedy for ignorance is asking questions." If the ignorant man does not inquire, his ignorance will stay with him. But if he has a questioning mind, some knowledgeable person will answer him, and he will no longer remain ignorant. There is a common belief about Islam that it teaches its adherents to be close-minded. In fact, Islam teaches the spirit of enquiry and asks its adherents to remove their ignorance by seeking answers to questions.

There is a saying in Arabic to the same effect: *To know that you do not know is half knowledge itself.* If an ignorant person is not aware of his ignorance, he will continue to remain in the same state. But when he becomes aware of his ignorance, he sets about seeking knowledge. He will try to turn his ignorance into knowledge. In this way his awareness of his ignorance will become the stepping-stone leading towards knowledge.

In ancient times, phenomena of nature were considered to be manifestations of God. The sight of the manifestations of nature, therefore, aroused in man the spirit of worship. It was only when these natural phenomena were divested of their divinity that the spirit of inquiry could be aroused in man. As a result, many of the mysteries of nature now lie unraveled.

An inquisitive mind is a *sine qua non* for the acquisition of knowledge. Only those who are possessed of this quality will achieve great success in intellectual and academic fields. Those devoid of this spirit will remain static, and will fail to climb to the top of the ladder of success.

It is this spirit which is the foundation of all scientific progress.

Knowledge is of two distinct kinds: that which we have been blessed with in the Quran and the *Hadith*, and that which we acquire as a result of our own research and endeavour. The first kind acquaints us with our Lord, and makes plain the issues to be faced in the everlasting

If the ignorant man does not inquire, his ignorance will stay with him. But if he has a questioning mind, some knowledgeable person will answer him, and he will no longer remain ignorant.

world, which awaits us after death. More important, it shows us how, in the course of our present life, we may prepare ourselves to meet those issues. The second kind of knowledge provides solutions to the social and economic problems, which we encounter in everyday life.

It is imperative that we should seek both forms of knowledge, but we should never lose sight of the fact that they vary considerably in their application. The knowledge of the Quran and the *Hadith* is essential for us to know the purpose of our life, understand our connection with God and God's creation plan for us and discover other aspects of spirituality.

The acquisition of knowledge of other sciences is a matter of worldly necessity. On the other hand, without knowledge of religion, the course of life to be adopted in this world for earning an everlasting reward in the Hereafter will constantly elude us.

The secular sciences guide us in our worldly matters, giving us instruction in the agricultural, industrial and civic practicalities of life. On the other hand, the Quran and *Hadith* set our feet on the path to eternal development. Clearly, it is just as important for Muslims as it is for anyone else to study various branches of knowledge, but they

It was only when natural phenomena were divested of their divinity that the spirit of enquiry could be aroused in man. As a result, many of the mysteries of nature now lie unraveled.

must distinguish between ultimate objectives and adventitious necessity. We must not only study the Quran and the *Hadith*, but must be keenly aware that the real reasons for studying them are very different from those which prompt us to seek worldly knowledge: we must constantly bear in mind also that religious knowledge is a moral priority.

The emphasis of Islam on learning and teaching was not confined to the Quran or the teachings of the Prophet. The Quran, in fact, has given a new outlook, a new perspective or paradigm as coined by Thomas

Kuhn (*The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, 1955). According to this Quranic paradigm, man's most important activity being intellectual contemplation or reflection, he is not supposed to blindly follow any idea or notion just because it was attributed to his ancestors or some other authority. He has to ponder on it critically and realistically. That is why we find that the Quran is replete with hundreds of inspirational and motivational verses that invite man to reflect on the wonderful creations of God.

For example: *In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are signs for people with intelligence, those who remember God standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, (saying) Our Lord! You have not created all this in vain (without purpose), Glory be to You.* (3: 190-91, 7: 176, 10: 24, 13: 3, 16: 11).

This, we can say, was the intellectual seed, which is called in academic circles, the spirit of enquiry. It is this spirit of enquiry, which has played the greatest role in bringing about the age of science. It is the zeal to discover which has led man to knowledge.

According to Toynbee and other world historians, this spirit of enquiry was the first and foremost prerequisite for the inauguration of the scientific era and the elimination of a superstitious outlook on nature and life.

The Quran has specific verses calling man towards shunning superstition and encouraging him to think. The Prophet himself had dealt with day-to-day problems of life in accordance with this realistic approach taught by the Quran. Consequently the same realistic approach became an integral part of the frame of mind of his Companions. They all became curious, inquisitive and realistic in all matters of life.

For example, once the Prophet passed by an oasis where he found some farmers who were date planters at work. When he asked what they were doing, he was told that they were pollinating the clusters of dates in order to produce a better yield. The Prophet expressed his disapproval of this process. Knowing this, the farmers immediately stopped it. But later on the Prophet was told that due to lack of proper pollination the yield had been very low as compared to the previous years. On hearing this, the Prophet replied. "You know your worldly matters better." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*). In other words, experiment and observation should be the final criteria in such worldly matters.

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From the above example one can understand that Islam does not teach close-mindedness but rather desires one to be open-minded, so that one understands the importance of each branch of knowledge and strives to gain such knowledge instead of living in ignorance. □

WHEN LIFE CEASES—WHAT THEN?

Be Conscious Now

WHEN a murderer is sentenced to death, from the moment the sentence is pronounced, he is as good as dead. Whether his execution is to take place the very next day or weeks later, is of no consequence: life simply loses all meaning for him. All smiles are wiped from his face and it is with difficulty that he brings himself to speak. His hands, once raised so savagely to rain blows upon the weak and innocent, now hang limp and lifeless by his sides. He becomes a forlorn creature, a mere shadow of his former self.

The judgement in court has made plain the reality—a man's sudden fall from power to powerlessness, from light to darkness, from material triumph to nothingness. Even before death, he finds himself in a world where his will is no longer his own. What then, will be his fate after death? After death, he will enter another world where he will be forced to bow to the will of the Creator.

Were man to remember this reality, his life would undergo the most sublime of transformations. It would then be brought home to him with tremendous force how inane it was to oppress the poor, unfortunate individuals who crossed his path and fell into his clutches. He would realize how senseless it was to ill-treat others, if he himself were to be subjected to divine retribution in the after-life. He would finally understand how mindless it was to entertain ideas of his own greatness, for greatness which cannot endure is of no intrinsic value. In the end, having realized all this, he would hang his head in shame.

Man drifts through life, an unthinking, pleasure-seeking, materially ambitious creature who enjoys making friends and accumulating riches. He revels in trivial distractions. Then something happens which stops him dead in his tracks. All of his faculties fail him. His eyes are sightless, his breathing stops. Death has come unannounced and unbidden. And in an instant he is bereft of all his worldly possessions, his friends, his pleasures, his riches, all that he holds dear—and he is carried away to the utter solitude of the grave.

Everyone alive today is under the sentence of death. But people are preoccupied with today and give no thought to tomorrow. In this world everyone is to a greater or lesser degree a culprit, but few pay heed to the fact that death is perpetually stalking us, and can catch us unawares—it can strike any moment. □

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 610 and 632 AD. 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**

It was He who spread out the earth and placed upon it mountains and rivers, and fruits of every kind in male and female pairs. He drew the veil of night over the day. In all this, truly, there are signs for people who reflect. (13: 3)

When we observe the earth, we will find that the conditions here appear to be most suitable for human settlement and growth. The earth is spread out beneath human beings like a natural floor. Deep oceans cater to human needs on the one hand and on the other there are the mountain ranges, so that both of them together help in maintaining a balance on the earth. The plants and trees could have grown independently, but they have been paired off, and pollination must play its part between them so that flowers, fruits and seeds will grow. The position of the earth is that, apart from its annual revolution around the sun, it rotates continuously on its axis. This rotation is completed in twenty-four hours, resulting in the creation of night and day. Anyone who seriously gives consideration to signs of this kind will be forced to accept that this earth is under an authoritative and powerful Lord. And He, by His own will, has made it subject to purposeful planning. Without conscious planning, this meaningfulness on earth would not have been at all possible.

On the earth are diverse tracts, adjoining one another: vineyards and cornfields and groves of palm, the single and the clustered. Their fruits are nourished by the same water; yet We make the taste of some excel that of others. In this also are signs for people who understand. (13: 4)

Abdullah ibn 'Abbas says that one strip of land is fertile while another is barren. One strip of land produces crops while one nearby does not. Mujahid says that the same is the case with mankind. There are good people in this world and also bad, though the origin of all is one. There

is a strange phenomenon on this earth: the soil in different places may be similar and may be watered by the same water, but in one place it will produce a tree whose fruit is sweet, while in another place it will produce a tree whose fruit is sour. One tree may have a high yield and another a low yield. This is a parallel in nature to the human condition. It is like all human beings, although cast in the same mould, showing a marked difference from one individual to another when it comes to deriving any benefit from the divine guidance which is consistently offered to all. One will receive the full benefit of such guidance, and thus have his entire life enriched by it, while another may avail of only a part of it or even reject it altogether. In other words, the same 'seeds' of guidance when 'sown' in different individuals will produce outcomes as different as the sweet and sour fruits of our analogy. □



True Reform

*The legal system and the
administration have their limits.
Genuine reform will come about only
if the spirit of reform is generated
among the people concerned.*

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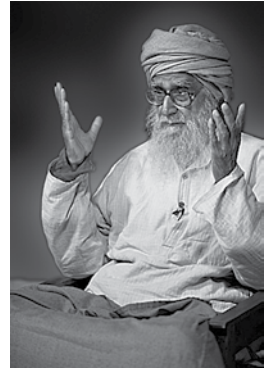
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ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered



India got its freedom in the year 1947 and on 15th August 2017, we are stepping into the 71st year of the Independence. Kindly share with us your experience of August 15, 1947.

Born in 1925, I grew up in a family where active interest was taken in national affairs, and there was much talk of independence. The whole atmosphere outside the house was likewise emotionally charged with the urge to be free.

All this led me to believe that slavery was the worst of conditions and independence the very best. Like many others I formed an innocent conception of the independence movement as being designed to bring the country straight out of hell and into heaven.

With all those impressions I waited for the day of Independence in a state of high expectation. It came finally on August 15, 1947. I was then 22 years of age and living in the UP city of Azamgarh. I still remember going out at night and seeing all the shops and houses illuminated. The new sense of freedom made me feel elated and as I walked along in a state of jubilation, I felt my feet were barely touching the ground. This was a state of happiness I had only so far read about. Now I was having my first real experience of it on August 15, 1947. Unfortunately, it was also my last.

Why do you say that the feeling of happiness was your last?

When the dawn appeared after the night of August 15, all the lights had gone out, and never again did they shine with the same brilliance. Never again in our state of freedom, did we experience the same euphoria as we did when we were as yet on the brink of being independent. We now had our freedom realized. The happiness we had expected had failed to materialize. This tragedy is attributable not so much to the British as to the Indians themselves. There had indeed been a problem between the British and the Indians prior to 1947, but the only solution offered was an intensification of the loathing the Indians felt for the British in the hopes that the latter would begin to feel themselves so alienated from the country that they would become unable to rule it.

It was in this atmosphere of antagonism that the journey towards freedom was made. The period prior to 1947 was marked by destructiveness; the policy of animosity and opposition proved

highly effective. After 1947, there should have ensued a period of constructiveness inspired by love and fellow-feeling. But this was not to be. For reasons of a very convoluted nature, the politics of hatred persisted throughout the dawn of this supposedly new age. The failure to transform them into the politics of love proved the greatest obstacle to the realization of the Indian dream of post-Independence days—the dream which had sustained and inspired all Indians in the very darkest of hours.

What do you think the Indians should have done or should not have done after Independence for fulfilling the dream which had inspired them?

Before 1947, certain unwise Muslim leaders had wrongly advocated the idea that Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations. This theory, responsible for their isolation had nothing whatsoever to do with either reason or Islam. Without doubt Hindus and Muslims have separate religions, but both are one nation because both live in the same country. That is why all the prophets have addressed their non-Muslim country-men as 'O my people'. But in the post-Independence years this concept has not been effectively presented before the people.

So far as I can gather from my study of this matter, both the Hindus and Muslims are equally responsible for the problem facing the country today. Neither group has fulfilled its responsibility to the new India. It is the intellectuals in a community who lead the people. But in free India the intellectuals of both the communities have failed in this respect.

What can the citizens of India do now which can bring about the real progress of this country? Is there hope?

Hope should always be there but we should adopt the right methods. In my opinion we have to address the individual minds. Win the mind and you will win the battle is what I believe in.

All the Indians should come out of the negative thinking which they have fallen into because of one fear or another about each other. Further, I would advise Muslims to take the initiative in putting an end—on a unilateral basis—to all mutual discord. In the process they should not ask others to change their course of action, nor should they allow themselves to be provoked. They should abandon the methods of protest, complaint and reaction and should launch their movements on the basis of sound internal construction. If Muslims resolved all controversial matters on unilateral basis, they would be following the method followed by the Prophet of Islam. □

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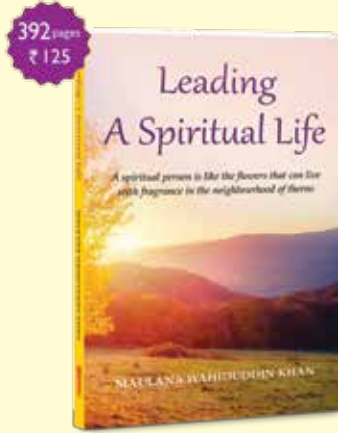
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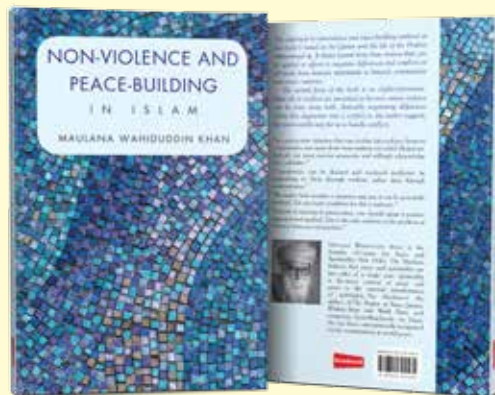
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