

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



A negative mentality is shaped by history.
A positive mentality shapes history.

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

Spirit of Islam is a monthly magazine which is now in its Eighth year of publication. The aim of this journal is to present Islam in the contemporary idiom, while at the same time the contents are of universal appeal and of interest to a wider circle of spiritual seekers. It is our desire to help Muslims rediscover Islam, focusing on its message of peace and spirituality as derived from the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet, and in general we strive towards religious understanding for bringing about greater harmony.

Another purpose of this magazine is to assist its readers to deal with life's challenges, deriving positivity even from negative occurrences, gaining in spirituality and developing themselves intellectually so that they may contribute constructively to society.

The magazine's regular readers will appreciate that the entire thrust of its articles is directed to the individual—a collection of intellectually prepared individuals being the sole foundation on which a peaceful and harmonious society can be built.

As the subtitle indicates, *Spirit of Islam* is working towards enlightening people on the subject of global peace and regularly addresses relevant contemporary issues. The articles on peace based on the teachings of the Prophet of Islam offer us an ideology of peace—principles which lay down how peace may be established between conflicting groups, controversies resolved and conflicts defused. We believe that violence begins in the mind and so an effective ideology of peace needs to be presented to counter its influence.

We hope and pray that God helps us in this noble endeavour and grants us His special blessings!



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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

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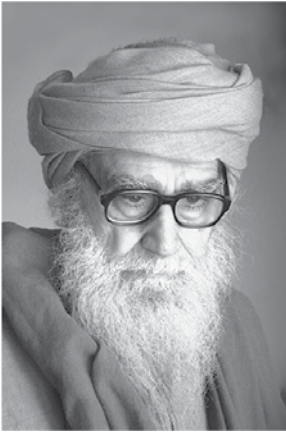
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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.

SETTING THE RIGHT PRIORITIES

IN view of the faith of the Muslims, their tradition, history and numbers in India, the Indian Muslims are in a position to make a major contribution in the development of this country. In any developed country no particular community remains backward. This is a law of nature.

The saying 'in giving we receive' could well have come true for the Muslims. But for this to become a reality, they need a period of tranquillity, and this is possible only if they unilaterally withdraw all their grudges and complaints against other communities. They should now rise above the reactionary psychology of the times. Unfortunately, the Muslim leadership has failed to give the necessary guidance. As a result, the Muslims in general are reduced to being a group 'with demands' and as such have not become a giver group.

The religion of Islam as it is, gives them enough stature to play a constructive and effective part in tackling the grave problems that our country is facing. But, due to the intellectual bankruptcy on the part of the Muslim leadership, no such solutions are forthcoming.

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

If the Muslims fail to relate to their present situation, it is in large measure due to their emotional development having atrophied in memory of their glorious past. They had, after all, been rulers of South Asia for almost a millennium. This indeed, is the principal underlying factor in the lack of realism which marks a great deal of their own planning for the future. Adverse circumstances having led them to the point where the only feasible course is to take 'a back seat', they are still unwilling to face up to the reality of the situation. Worse, they are misled by their leaders, who keep harking back to the heyday of the Mughal reign. In the present context, the paths along which the Muslims are directed by popular leaders can only lead to destruction.

The realization has not yet come to them that from the position of the 'back seat', they are free to devote their time and energy to exploiting their own considerable potential. By putting aside notions of privilege and precedence, they can better educate and develop themselves in consonance with the present times. It is simply a question of their getting their priorities right.

In this world, it is only those can ultimately succeed who stop railing against defeat, and accept it with a view to doing something positive about the situation. Muslims should never lose sight of the fact that a strategic retreat makes it possible to return to the fray. Such a wise course was very well understood by the Muslims 1,400 years ago when they drew up the peace treaty of Hudaibiya which, although apparently over-conciliatory towards the opponent, ultimately permitted the Prophet of Islam's mission to go forward unhindered.

Muslims must concede that ours is a highly competitive world, one in which success, and sometimes the very survival, is a question of outdistancing others. But, looked at positively, this spirit of competition is the ladder to human progress. Few advances have been made in history without this spirit having been predominant. The first step towards taking positive action is to admit defeat, and face the realities of the situation. Once that psychological hurdle has been cleared, there is nothing to stop an individual, community or nation from working towards regaining, or even bettering, its lost position. What must be avoided at all costs is sinking irrevocably into a morass of paranoid stagnation. While there is nothing to be gained from pessimism, there is everything to be gained from a positive approach. □

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FROM THE EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

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ISLAM: RELIGION OF TOLERANCE

ISLAM is an entirely tolerant religion. Islam desires peace to prevail in the world. The Quran calls the way of Islam 'the path of Peace' (5:16). The state of peace can never prevail in a society if tolerant attitude is lacking in the people. Tolerance is the only foundation for peace. In a society where tolerance is absent, peace likewise will be non-existent.

Peace is the religion of the universe. Peace should, therefore, be the religion of man too, so that, in the words of Bible, the will of the Lord may be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)

In a similar vein, the Quran tells us that: The sun is not allowed to overtake the moon, nor does the night outpace the day. Each in its own orbit runs. (36: 40)

When God created heaven and the earth, He so ordered things that each part might perform its function peacefully without clashing with any other part. For billions of years, therefore, the entire universe has been fulfilling its function in total harmony with His divine plan.

The universe is following this path of peace—which is known in science as the law of nature. The law of nature is imposed upon universe by God, whereas man has to adopt this path of peace of his own free will. This has been expressed in the Quran in these words: Do they seek a religion other than the religion of God, when everything in the heavens and the earth has submitted to Him, willingly or unwillingly? To Him they shall all return. (3: 83)

Peace is no external factor to be artificially imposed upon man. Peace is inherent in nature itself. The system of nature set up by God already rests on the basis of peace. If this system is not disrupted, it will continue to stay the course set for it by the Almighty. But the only way to keep humanity on the path of peace is to rid it of corruption. That is why the Quran enjoins: "And do not corrupt the land after it has been set in order". (7: 85)

In order to preserve peace established by nature from disruption, two important injunctions have been laid down by Islam. One, at the individual level, stresses the exercise of patience, and the other, at the social level, forbids taking the offensive.

1. Negative reaction on the part of the individual is the greatest factor responsible for disrupting peace in daily life. It repeatedly happens that in social life one experiences bitterness on account of others. On such occasions, if one reacts negatively, the matter will escalate to the point of a head-on collision. That is why Islam repeatedly enjoins us to tread the path of patience. The Quran says: Truly, those who persevere patiently will be requited without measure. (39: 10)

The reason for the rewards for patience being so great is that patience is the key factor in maintaining the desired system of God. In the words of the Quran the patient man is the helper of God. (61:14)

2. The other injunction, designed to maintain peace in human society, forbids the waging of an offensive war. No one in Islam enjoys the right to wage war against another. There are no grounds on which this could be considered justifiable.

There is only one kind of war permitted in Islam and that is a defensive war. If a nation, by deviating from the principles of nature, wages war against another nation, defence in such circumstances, subject to certain conditions, is temporarily allowed.

To sum up, Islam is a religion of peace. The Arabic root of Islam, 'silm', means peace. The Quran says: '... and God calls to the home of peace'. (10: 25)

Peace is basic to all religions. Let us all strive then to establish peace in the world, for that is the bedrock on which all human progress rests. □

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WOMAN'S ROLE IN ISLAM

Equal Status, Different Role

THE Quran calls Islam a religion of nature. This is because Islam is, in fact, based on the laws of nature. The commands of the Quran are a direct expression of those laws which have operated in the world of nature since its creation.

The teachings of Islam regarding women are based on the same laws of nature. Accepting them is not akin to the acceptance of general human laws, where both acceptance and refusal are possible. The rejection of Islamic laws as regards women is actually a rejection of the laws of nature, and by doing so, man can never successfully construct his life in the present world.

Study of the Quran and *Hadith* informs us that one of the laws of nature is that all the things in the world have been created in the form of pairs. The Quran states:

And We created pairs of all things so that you might reflect. (51: 49)

The scientific study of the universe has further corroborated this law of nature. The primary unit of the universe, the atom, is composed of negative and positive particles. In the absence of any one of the two, the atom cannot come into existence. Even trees have male and female characteristics. The whole world is said to exist in pairs. Nature's entire factory has functioned all along on this binary basis.

The gender binarism shows that if anything in this world is to function properly, it must first recognize its true position and adhere strictly to the limits set for it by nature itself.

For instance, if the negative particles of atoms tried to change themselves into positive particles, or vice versa, the entire structure of the atom would be shattered. In a similar way, if men, animals and trees wanted a change in their position and they opted for a change in their roles—the entire system of nature would be disrupted.

Islamic law regarding women is rooted in this system of nature. According to Islam, men and women are equal as regards honour and status, but physically, biologically and psychologically they are different. In order to maintain the system of nature between men and women socially, Islam advocates that women should work in their capacity while remaining within the bounds of modesty and piety thereby ensuring their safety in every way.

The system of the human world is divided into two departments of equal importance: one is represented by the 'home' and the other by the 'office.' Just as an office in this context is not confined by four walls but represents a centre of activity, similarly 'home' is not marked by a boundary, being also a complete practical centre of activity. Under this division, men and women have been assigned different fields of activity. All tasks are of equal importance, being neither superior nor inferior.

This system of nature has functioned successfully in the world for thousands of years. With the emergence of western civilization in modern times, efforts were made for the first time to repudiate this system. In the name of gender equality, an intensive movement was launched. Male and female were declared to be identical and interchangeable in all respects. But the 200-year experiment showed that this self-styled equality could not be established in any part of the world.

Many reports and surveys came out in the western press which describe the failure of the feminism movement. Following is a report concerning the USA, the most developed part of the world. This report was published in the October 1993 issue of *The Atlantic magazine* under the caption: *Feminism's Identity Crisis, The most effective backlash against feminism comes from within.*

The rejection of Islamic laws as regards women is actually a rejection of the laws of nature, and by doing so, man can never successfully construct his life in the present world.

According to the report, polls suggest that a majority of women hesitate to associate themselves with the feminist movement, not wanting to identify themselves as feminists. The polls also adumbrate unarticulated ambivalence about feminist ideals, particularly with respect to private life.

Feminism is a non-issue, says Ellen Levine, the editor-in-chief of *Redbook*. Women don't think about it. They don't talk about it. And they seem not to be particularly interested in politics. Feminism, however, is popularly

deemed to represent the belief that men and women are equally capable of raising children and equally capable of waging war. Thus, feminism represents, in the popular view, a rejection of femininity. According to a survey by *Redbook*, feminism has made it harder for women to balance work and family life. Ellen Levine believes that wage-earning mothers still tend to feel guilty about not being with their

children and to worry that “the more women get ahead professionally; the more children will fall back.”

However, it must be admitted that just as modern woman has failed to find her real position, being caught in the lure of unnatural freedom, similarly a woman in the present Muslim society has been largely denied rights that Islam has granted her, for instance, a woman becoming a victim of a man’s maltreatment or her failing to receive her share in her parent’s property, etc.

Now the question arises as to the solution to this problem. The solution to it lies in education. It is a fact that present-day Muslims, both men and women, have been lagging far behind in education. There was a time when, during the Abbasid period (AD 751-1258), the highest point in Muslim culture, literacy was almost one hundred percent. Not only men but women as well received the education prevalent at that time. It is at this point—the point of education—that Muslims should begin a new Islamic life. If Muslims

Literacy, the acquisition of basic general knowledge, and some experience with problem-solving have an intrinsic value for the individual and for society which cannot be overestimated.

were to concentrate on this, and strive towards the goal of hundred percent literacy, that alone would suffice to bring about their overall reformation. Once that goal is attained, all other problems could be set right. Intellectually as well as pragmatically, Muslims would become a developed community.

With the efforts of Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) and his colleague, Maulvi Samiullah, an educational movement was certainly launched among Muslims. However, due to certain shortcomings, this movement could not be a success. First, Muslims set a university as the target for their educational struggle. But when this university came into being, the hard reality dawned upon them that most students were not qualified for admission. The solution was sought in the form of reservations, which, ironically, only compounded the problem. With “reservation,” all candidates, whether or not they qualified, had to be granted admission. And as a result, the Muslim university ultimately came to be a factory turning out people who had academic degrees but no real qualifications.

This concept of the Muslim educational institution has clearly proved inadequate, if not actually counterproductive. It will continue to be so until education is placed at the forefront. There can be no compromise

with high standards. The principle of reservation and concessions must be shunned. Only those students who are truly qualified should find a place in the university. At the same time, Muslims should be encouraged to enter into all educational institutions, whether run by Muslims, Hindus, or Christians.

The proper way for Muslims to achieve progress is to set the goal of education for its own sake. Literacy, the acquisition of basic general knowledge, and some experience with problem-solving have an intrinsic value for the individual and for society which cannot be overestimated. Universal primary education was wisely made a solemn directive in the Constitution of Independent India. The fact that a considerable number of our population of 1.35-plus billion is still denied this elementary human right is a major source of the problems our various communities face today. What Muslims need today more than a Muslim university is Muslim schools. It is a matter of the greatest urgency that an appropriate number of standard schools at the primary and secondary level be started in every settlement.

Women can play a great role in this campaign for education. The literate woman's ability to read to her young children, and the example she sets in her own quest for knowledge are the most powerful stimuli in their educational progress.

Women can play a great role in this campaign for education. For instance, educated women can coach their children at home. The literate woman's ability to read to her young children, and the example she sets in her own quest for knowledge are the most powerful stimuli in their educational progress. Furthermore, women can be better teachers than men when it comes to teaching children. For women, this will not amount to a change of workplace, but will simply be an extension of the home, a broadening of the practical activity centred on child-rearing assigned to her by nature.

By playing this role effectively, Muslim women can prepare the next generation, which is the greatest need of the hour. In this way, they will hasten the time when an entire generation will be equipped with standard education. They would then have every opportunity to receive education in the higher institutions of their choice, and would be more certain of finding productive employment thereafter. □



THE MEANINGFULNESS OF THE UNIVERSE

The Way to God-realization

SCIENCE is the study of nature. Nature comprises of everything we call the universe. The study of science began initially with very few discoveries, however, as research in the subject increased and advanced knowledge was gained, it became clear that the universe is extremely meaningful. Any explanation of the universe which does not take into account its meaningfulness contradicts the findings of science.

Consider, for instance, that scientific knowledge has revealed that our vast expanding universe is characterized by intelligent design in its every aspect. Now if it is not accepted that the universe has an intelligent designer behind it, then this extraordinarily meaningful universe and all of its phenomena become strange and inexplicable. Similarly, research on the universe has shown that it is custom-made for human beings, or in other words, the universe is completely in accordance with the requirements of sustaining a creature like man.

If we do not believe in the existence of a Creator who created such remarkable consonance between the universe on the one hand and human beings on the other hand, then there would not be any other coherent explanation for this harmony between two distinct entities. Moreover, discoveries in various scientific disciplines indicate that there is a meticulous coordination between the numerous components of the universe.

An attribute of the universe which has astonished scientists is the presence of fine-tuning in the constants of nature. For example, the cosmological constant is responsible for the acceleration of the universe at its current rate. This constant has a very precise value, a value it had to have for galaxies to form, for stars to form, and for us to be here. Such features of the universe are truly mind-boggling.

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To quote an excerpt from a book review by physicist Alan Lightman on the book *Why Science Does Not Disprove God?* by mathematician Amir D. Aczel:

“There is plenty of good scientific evidence that our universe began about 14 billion years ago, in a Big Bang of enormously high density and temperature, long before planets, stars and even atoms existed. But what came before? Krauss in his book discusses the current thinking of physicists that our entire universe could have emerged from a jitter in the amorphous haze of the subatomic world called the

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quantum foam, in which energy and matter can materialize out of nothing. (On the level of single subatomic particles, physicists have verified in the lab that such creation from “nothing” can occur.) Krauss’s punch line is that we do not need God to create the universe. The quantum foam can do it quite nicely all on its own. Aczel asks the obvious question: But where did the quantum foam come from? Where did the quantum laws come from? Hasn’t Krauss simply passed the buck? Legitimate questions. But ones we will probably never be able to answer...[the fine-tuning problem].

For the past 50 years or so, physicists have become more and more aware that various fundamental parameters of our universe appear to be fine-tuned to allow the emergence of life—not only life as we know it but life of any kind. For example, if the nuclear force were slightly stronger than it is, then all of the hydrogen atoms in the infant universe would have fused with other hydrogen atoms to make helium, and there would be no hydrogen left. No hydrogen means no water. On the other hand, if the nuclear force were substantially weaker than it is, then the complex atoms needed for biology could not hold together.

In another, even more striking example, if the cosmic “dark energy” discovered 15 years ago were a little denser than it actually is, our universe would have expanded so rapidly that matter could never have pulled itself together to form stars. And if the dark energy were a little smaller, the universe would have collapsed long before stars had time to form. Atoms are made in stars. Without stars there would be no atoms and no life. So, the question is: Why? Why do these parameters lie in the narrow range that allows life?”

Science is not a religious subject, and its concern is certainly not the discovery of God. The subject of science is simply the objective study of creation. However, the study of creation naturally includes the study of the Creator as well. This is why scientific research into creation has become a means of unraveling aspects of the Creator. The findings of study on nature are, in other words, discoveries of the signs of God (51: 20). From this perspective, it would be right to say that the discovery of the meaningfulness of creation is essentially the discovery of an intelligent Creator.

The purpose of human life has been stated in the Quran in these words: "I created the *jinn* and humankind only so that they might worship Me" (51: 56). Noted scholars of Quran such as Ibn Kathir and Mujahid interpret the words '*so that they might worship Me*' as '*so that they might discover Me*'.

A human being has been created with independent thinking and free will. This is why a human being is defined as a creature who possesses the capacity for conceptual thought. The test of an individual is to utilize this mental ability granted to him, develop his thinking power and discover God through a process of study, observation and contemplation.

There are two levels of this discovery of God. The first is to discover God at the level of common sense and, the second is to discover one's Creator at the level of scientific knowledge and understanding. Since past thousands of years it was required of man to discover God by putting to use his basic level of reasoning and awakening his inherent nature. If a person is truly sincere, his common sense alone would be instrumental in making him reach God.

The second level of discovery of God is through study of science. This involves gaining knowledge about the signs of God hidden in the universe and arriving at a rational discovery of God by increasing one's learning of natural phenomena. For such kind of comprehension the supporting data provided by scientific research is crucial for study and reflection. Merely logical thinking is not enough to arrive at a scientific realization of God—for this scientific findings on nature are a prerequisite. The

God gave human beings a rational way of thinking so that they could themselves discover the hidden wisdom of the Creator in His creation. Modern science is the other name for unfolding of the hidden wisdom and truths of the universe.

knowledge of the laws of nature therefore play a very important part in discovering God at a rational level. This knowledge was not available to ancient man, which is why he could not reach the second higher level of discovery of God.

An attribute of God is that He manages human history. That is, while keeping human freedom intact, God makes human history arrive at a stage necessary according to the divine scheme of things. God thus develops a plan for human beings and achieves it without abrogating human freedom. This is a very complex task, one which only the Creator in all His superior powers can bring about. Our task is to understand this plan of the Creator, rather than try to change it.

God has repeatedly informed in the Quran that the universe has been subjected for human beings (45:13). Man was enjoined to discover these laws governing the universe and then through this deep knowledge of creation, attain a high level of discovery of the Creator. However, Muslims proved to be inadequate for this task of discovering the laws of nature. Then God raised up another community to fulfil His plan (47: 38). This was the Christian community of Europe and America. It so happened that the European Christian nations suffered a defeat in the Crusades and as a consequence had to discontinue the fight. The only option left before them was to re-plan their course of action, and turn their energies in a direction other than the battlefield. Gradually, they diverted their attention to studying and discovering the laws governing nature and the universe.

The Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei is regarded as the father of modern science. The scientific method began largely with Galileo's efforts to observation and study of celestial objects, and the physics of their motion. After him, the process of study of nature continued for up to 400 years and reached its culmination in the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. The tremendous discoveries made in the physical world, both at the microscopic and macroscopic levels, provided enormous amount of information to attain an exalted level of understanding of the Creator of the universe.

In the universe that God has created, every infinitesimally small component has the Creator's imprint stamped upon it. Knowledge of this is scattered throughout the cosmos. God gave human beings a rational way of thinking so that they could themselves discover the hidden wisdom of the Creator in His creation. Modern science is the other name for unfolding of the hidden wisdom and truths of the universe. □

CHANGING DIRECTION

The True Import

“The foolish will ask, ‘What has made them turn away from their direction of prayer which they used to face?’ Say, ‘The East and the West belong to God. He guides whom He pleases to the right path.’ Thus, We have made you a middle nation, so that you may act as witnesses for humankind, and the Messenger may be a witness for you. We decreed your former prayer direction towards which you used to face only in order that We might make a clear distinction between the Messenger’s true followers and those who were to turn their backs on him. This was indeed a hard test for all but those whom God has guided. God will never let your faith go to waste. God is compassionate and merciful to humankind.” (2: 142-143)

THE *qiblah* (present-day *Kabah*) is the direction Muslims face when they pray. This direction has to do with the form, rather than the spirit, of worship. A *qiblah* is appointed so that prayer may assume an organized pattern. God can change it as He pleases, for every direction faces Him. The direction that He lays down is the one that we should face in our prayer, whatever direction it may be.

Before the advent of Islam, Jews offered their prayers facing towards Jerusalem. This old *qiblah* had come to be thought of as sacred and inviolable. In the second year after the Prophet’s emigration to Madinah, he was commanded to change the direction of prayer, and face Makkah instead of Jerusalem. Some people found this switch difficult to accept. How, they thought, could another place be the *qiblah* when Jerusalem had held this position since time immemorial? The Jews used the change of the *qiblah* as an excuse for spreading all sorts of rumours about the Prophet. Previous prophets have always faced Jerusalem in their prayer, they said. How is it that this prophet has gone against them? They inferred that the only purpose of his mission was to spite the Jews. Some poured scorn on Muhammad’s claim to prophethood. “He seems to be in two minds about his own mission”, they said. “Sometimes he faces Jerusalem, sometimes Makkah.” Others said: “Well, if the *Kabah* in Makkah is the

The change of qiblah was a sign indicating that God had changed the course of history towards peace and reconciliation.

real *qiblah*, then all the prayers which Muslims have made towards Jerusalem have been wasted.”

These were the sort of objections that Jews and hypocrites made. True believers, those who were not caught up in the externals of religion, did not let such things dishearten them. They realized that it is not the direction of prayer that really matters, it is God’s commandment. God can lay down any *qiblah*, whenever He likes. Whatever He prescribes should be followed. The commandment regarding the change of *qiblah* was revealed seventeen months after the Prophet’s emigration to Madinah. The Prophet was praying along with a group of his Companions at the time. As soon as God’s commandment became clear, all of them turned, as they were praying, from Jerusalem to Makkah—a 160° turn from north-west to south.

The change of *qiblah* was a sign indicating that God had changed the course of history towards peace and reconciliation. Now, the *Kabah* would remain, until the end of time, a rallying-point for the call to divine religion, a centre for all true believers in God.

The true believers now had to communicate the word of God to their fellow human beings, just as the Prophet of God communicated it to them. This is what is meant by the word ‘middle nation’. In other words they were the connection between the Prophet and other people. This is a responsibility that is always incumbent upon the Muslim community. Their success, both in this world and the next, depends upon how they discharge this responsibility.

“We have frequently seen you turn your face towards heaven. So, We will make you turn in a direction for prayer that will please you. So, turn your face now towards the Sacred Mosque: and wherever you may be, turn your faces towards it. Those who were given the Book know this to be the truth from their Lord. God is not unaware of what they do. But even if you should produce every kind of sign for those who have been given the Book, they would never accept your prayer direction, nor would you accept their prayer direction: nor would any of them accept one another’s direction. If, after all the knowledge you have been given, you yield to their desires, then, you shall surely become a transgressor. Those to whom We have given the Book recognize it just as they recognize their own sons. But, some of them knowingly conceal the truth. Truth is what comes from your Lord; therefore, do not be of those who doubt.” (2: 144-147)

Not until the Prophet of Islam received divine revelation on a certain matter, did he change the pattern of previous prophets. Faithful to this

principle, he initially made Jerusalem his *qiblah*, for prophets since the time of Solomon had prayed in that direction. The faith conveyed by the Prophet of Islam had also to be separated and made distinct from the previous traditions so that it could appear in a new and unmistakably pure form.

For the above reason, the Prophet was eagerly awaiting instructions to change the *qiblah*. In the second year after his emigration to Madinah, he received the commandment. The Prophets who had come among the Jewish people had been informed that one day God would alter the *qiblah*, and they had passed the knowledge on to the Jews. Yet when it happened only a few of them, such as Abdullah ibn Salam and Mukhaireeq, confirmed the authenticity of this commandment and acknowledged that God had revealed the truth through the Prophet Muhammad.

Whenever God reveals some truth to the world, He makes it absolutely clear. To accept it one should discover God their creator. People summarily reject the truth, and think that a few words that they have deigned to utter are proof that they are standing on firm intellectual ground. But sooner or later, they are bound to realize the weakness of their arguments and it will dawn upon them that, all along, they had been labouring under a false sense of security. □



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ROAD TO TRANQUILITY OF MIND

Aspire For More, Settle For Less

IN the present world, there are many people who have become habituated to a number of addictions like alcohol, tobacco and psychotropic drugs. It is well-known that these habits are very bad for health; yet, people are unable to give up these habits that eventually become addictions.

When an addict was asked why he was entrapped in this unhealthy habit, he smiled and answered, "*Ye mere liye ek bhulawa habit hai*" (This is how I try to forget my frustrations). He said that he knew full well that this was a killer habit but still, he did it to lessen his pain.

After studying several people to understand why they live in frustration and pain, it can be concluded that there is no real reason for this, except for having unrealistic goals. As people grow older and are looking for a job, they often fail, because of their own ambition, and their inability to distinguish between what is realistic and what is unrealistic in the job situation. A realistic job is always doable; an unrealistic job is quite the reverse. When they take up an unrealistic job and find, throughout the rest of their lives, that its targets are never achievable, they live in a state of perpetual anxiety. Faced with the demands of day-to-day life, neither are they able to leave their jobs nor be comfortable at their jobs. The result is frustration.

There is a way out: Adopt a unique formula, aspire for more and settle for less. One is ambitious by nature and therefore feels compelled to aim for unachievable goals. At the same time, one should reason and become aware of his inherent weaknesses and accept the fact that no one has the power to achieve all the things that he ideally wants to. Therefore, a successful person is one who adopts the formula of desiring more but remaining satisfied with less.

If you are living in contentment, then you will be happy. But if you are discontented with what you have achieved, you are bound to live in a state of unhappiness. If you become aware of this fact, you will easily be able to fulfil your ambitions and instantly achieve happiness. Happiness is an internal phenomenon; it is not an external achievement.

Jawaharlal Nehru completed his law studies from Allahabad University following which he practised in the Allahabad High Court. He first wanted to make his career in the field of law but he was not successful. He then took the second option of politics and became successful as a politician.

In other words, it means that in this world, there are always several options and if one option does not work, one should take another and try it out. Of course, it is not as easy as it sounds, especially for the less privileged, but the right attitude may help one deal better with life's challenges.

This is the story of all human beings. Every person should realize that the world in which he has to lead his life, is full of options. All one needs to do is refuse to succumb to despair and instantly embark on an alternative option even if that option was never their first choice. In this world, that is the secret of success. Don't give up, just try something new and look ahead with hope. □

One is ambitious by nature and therefore feels compelled to aim for unachievable goals. At the same time, one should reason and become aware of his inherent weaknesses and accept the fact that no one has the power to achieve all the things that he ideally wants to.



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PATIENT PERSEVERENCE VS PROTEST

Choose the Wise Strategy

YOUTH are the most productive and energetic asset of a nation. They can be instrumental to bring value to the world. Unfortunately, people, including the youth think that protests and demonstrations will get them what they want. There is no such example in history where protest directly resulted into a long term and positive change. On the contrary, it only aggravated the situations. If there is an issue at hand, then the authorities need to be presented with the issue in a peaceful manner. If the youth with their strength and vitality react to every adverse situation through protests and demands, it will take them away from the goal of education. They must singularly focus on education and stay away from all distractions like student-politics and student-unions.

Usually, the psychology behind protest is the feeling that if one were to exercise restraint and patience, then the other group would take advantage of the situation. Therefore people say that there is a limit to one's patience. Student politics has adversely affected the educational system. An alternative situation to such politics is that educational institutions should work toward better management of their infrastructure and programmes. They must allow critical feedback from students, which would render unnecessary the need to engage in political mobilization over issues.

According to the law of nature, any substantial result is achieved only through long-term planning. Short-term planning cannot produce any valuable result.

The Quran holds patience as the highest worship rewards of which has no limit. The Quran talks about limitless reward for keeping patience. When there is no limit to the reward to patience, how can there be any limit to patience? Exercising patience allows the process of one's personality development continue unhindered. Patience is not an

isolated attribute, but has a direct role to play in one's intellectual development. Without patience one cannot reflect or ponder over higher truths. If one lacks a patient personality, one would remain agitated and disturbed. With such a state of mind one will be unable to contemplate on the deeper realities of life. This is why patience has to be adhered to throughout our lives.

A positive social change is possible only through education. Education leads to self-discipline. This approach seems to be very long-term, but according to the law of nature, any substantial result is achieved only through long-term planning. Short-term planning cannot produce any valuable result. Social upliftment or nation-building is like growing trees of oak. If we perform this task in the right way, a time will come when nation-building will have become a reality. However, if we do not adopt the right method to carry out this task, then even after thousands of years of effort we will not be able to achieve our target.

There is a very illustrative lesson from the life of George Bernard Shaw, the Irish playwright and critic. In earlier times, Ireland was not a place for quality education. Once an Irish person expressed his despair to Shaw about the community lagging behind in education. Upon enquiring, Shaw learnt that the person was also uneducated. Shaw advised him to secure education for himself first so that at least one person in the community shall no longer remain illiterate. So, the message is: Identify where the world lacks value, and then fill that gap by first starting from yourself.

A quality education will contribute to the nation by producing a good citizen. A good citizen is one who has a predictable character. His fellow human beings should be confident of his behaviour beforehand. For example, while planting saplings, a gardener assumes that no one would harm what he is planting. A gardener expects this good character in his fellow human beings. The student community of the world should be of such predictable character. Their seriousness in educating themselves should be such that the world should have confidence that they will not take to violence in any situation. In addition to this, the world should expect them to resolve the issues peacefully while continuing to pursue their higher goals of acquiring knowledge and skills. This attitude will surely lead to the development of the nation. □

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DISCOVERY OF GOD

The Source of True Bliss

ONE who has found God has found everything. After the discovery of God, no further discovery remains to be made. Thus, when a man has discovered God, his entire attention is focussed upon Him. God, for him, becomes a treasure which he cherishes, and it is to Him then that he has recourse for all his worldly and eternal needs.

God's world is a collection of atoms. In its elemental form, it all consists of one and the same type of inert matter; but God has moulded this matter into countless diverse forms: light, heat, greenery, flowing water. He has also invested lifeless matter with the properties of colour, taste and smell; and everywhere, He has set things in motion, having carefully controlled this motion by gravity. Discovering God who has made such a world is much more than just acquiring a dry creed. It means filling one's heart and soul with the radiant glow of divine light and opening one's mind to incredible beauty and delicacy.

When we eat delicious fruits, this gives us a great sense of enjoyment. When we hear beautiful music we are quite entranced by it. When a handsome child is born to a couple, their joy knows no bounds. Then what of our experience of God, who is the source of all beauty, joy and virtue? On discovering Him, can one remain unmoved? This is something which is hardly imaginable, for such a sublime experience—like coming close to a source of dazzling radiance—must surely leave its mark on one.

Having endowed things with their unique qualities, God Himself must have qualities that His discoverers may savour. To discover Him, therefore, is to experience Him like a fragrance in the nostrils, a taste which excites the palate; a texture which is a joy to caress; a melody which touches the heart. To come close to Him is to live in an everlasting garden of brilliant colours and delicate fragrances. It is to hear such music that one might wish its enchantment to last forever.

The Creator of all light, God Himself is the most resplendent of all beings. He is the light of the heavens and of the earth, shedding His radiance on the personalities of all who discover Him. His is the greatest treasure-house of all true wisdom. He is the greatest repository of all true strength. His discoverers are so fortified by His strength and so enlightened by His wisdom that no flood or hurricane can carry them away. They cannot, once having known Him, do other than evolve into superior human beings. □

WINNING FRIENDS

Through Unilateral Good Behaviour

SOMEONE is your actual friend; another is your potential friend. This is one of the universal concepts given in the Quran. A relevant verse from the Quran on this subject is:

Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend. (41: 34)

These Quranic verses have a background. When the Prophet of Islam started his mission in ancient Makkah, people became hostile to him and to his mission. Clearly, it was an undesirable situation for both the Prophet and his Companions.

At this moment of crisis, the Prophet and his Companions were given the above guidance. It meant: don't show negative reaction, don't try to adopt the policy of tit for tat.

This formula worked very well. Very soon hostilities ceased altogether. The majority of those who had been hostile became the friends of the Prophet—first in Makkah and then gradually throughout the whole of the Arabian Peninsula.

Why did this formula prove to be so effective? The reason is very simple, good behaviour in return for bad behaviour has a far-reaching effect; it touches the conscience of others.

And it is a fact that when you are able to touch the conscience of the other person, you will successfully change his heart. According to the law of nature, this behaviour is like a psychological compulsion; no one can afford to go against his conscience.

This Quranic teaching is based on a principle that may be called unilateral ethics. Bilateral ethics is not part of the social scheme of the Quran.

There is no doubt that in terms of result, unilateral ethics is far more effective than bilateral ethics. □

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you will successfully
change his heart.*

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



SIGNS OF GOD

Reasons for Belief

WHEN we look at the different life forms, we witness an astonishing spectacle. Certain material objects come together in one body, and there comes into being a creature like a fish swimming through water, or a bird soaring in the skies. Of the great variety of creatures which abound on the earth, the one of greatest interest to us is Man. In ways that are a mystery to us, he is moulded into a well-proportioned form. The bones within him take on the meaningful shape of the skeleton, which is covered with flesh and sealed in by a layer of skin, out of which sprout hair and nails. With blood coursing through channels within this frame, all of this adds up to a human being who walks about, holds things in his hands, who hears, smells, tastes, who has a mind which remembers things, accumulates information, analyzes it and then expresses it in speech and in writing.

The formation of such an amazing being from inert matter is more than a miracle. The particles of which a man is composed are the same as that of earth and stone. But have we ever heard a piece of earth talking, or seen a piece of stone walking around? The word miraculous is barely adequate to describe the capabilities of man. But what else is there to this walking, talking, thinking, feeling man which distinguishes

him from earth and stone? This factor—life—is still a mystery to us. There must indeed be a superior Being who has imbued inert matter with this quality, thus accomplishing a unique feat of creation.

Man has only to think of the nature of his own being to understand the nature of God. The self, the ego in man, has an individuality of its own, which is quite distinct from that of others of his kind living here on this earth. The ego in man is absolutely sure of its own existence. It is the part of man which thinks, feels, forms opinions, has intentions and puts them into practice. It also decides for itself which course of action to take. Every human being is thus a separate personality with a will and power of his own. Since our experience of such a being is an everyday matter, what is astonishing about the existence of God, who also is a being wielding personal power, although on a scale far greater than ourselves? Believing in God is a very similar mental process to believing in one's own self. That is why the Quran says that man himself is ample evidence for himself, however much he may excuse himself (75: 14-15).

People demand some miraculous proof before they will believe in the truth of God and His message. But what further proof do they require when they have the miracle of the whole of the universe which has been functioning perfectly for millions of years on the vastest of scales? If the sceptic is not prepared to accept such a great miracle, then how is he going to shed his doubts when he sees lesser miracles? In truth, man has been provided with everything he needs to enable him to believe in God, and then to place himself at His service. If, in spite of this, he does not believe in God, and fails to acknowledge God's power and perfection, then it is he himself and not anyone else who is to blame. □

What further proof do the sceptics require when they have the miracle of the whole of the universe which has been functioning perfectly for millions of years on the vastest of scales?



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.



TOWARDS A NONVIOLENT WORLD

A Lesson from History

THOUGH the history of nonviolent movement is a very long one, historians concede that “the most massive and historically effective example of nonviolent activism was that of the movement organized by Mahatma Gandhi”.

India can be justly proud that it was in this country, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, where for the first time in human history a nonviolent movement culminated in such resounding success.

The first target for Mahatma Gandhi was to usher in peaceful political change throughout the country. This ambition was fulfilled in 1947. Mahatma Gandhi’s second target was to bring about social change on the basis of nonviolence. But before he could achieve his second target, he was tragically removed from the scene of action.

Now our greatest need is to fulfil Mahatma Gandhi’s mission. After political change we have to bring about social change in our country through *Gandhi Andolan*, that is, a nonviolent movement. If India could be successful on this front, it would undoubtedly find itself in a position to give the lead to the entire world.

There is only one way of exploiting the nonviolent method for the reform of a society—and that is, to bring about a change in the thinking of the individual, the basic unit of society.

It has been rightly observed that all violence is born in the mind, and that it can be terminated in the mind itself. For instance, during the

Second World War, Japan was burning to revenge itself on America. Japanese said that America had devastated their town of Hiroshima, so they would devastate America. Although Japan's air force had been badly hit, its army was still intact, and its officers were bent on vengeance. At that juncture certain intellectuals in Japan pointed out that if America had destroyed Hiroshima, they had already destroyed America's Pearl Harbour. In this way they were at par. The score was even.

Due to this timely guidance, the Japanese came to rethink their position, and, abandoning the path of confrontation with America, opted instead for the path of adjustment with it. In so doing, they were tremendously successful.

The truth is that intellectual awakening is the only way to produce a nonviolent world. This is, without doubt, a long and laborious struggle. But we have no other alternative. Violence is the result of misguided thinking. The day you succeed in putting an end to such thought, violence will disappear on its own.

Take the case, for example, of riots in India. In this matter it has been found that riots are a result of erroneous way of thinking. If one has the patience to find out the truth, one will get the correct understanding of the situation. For example, a group of people, at some disturbing news of loss caused to them by another group, immediately react and try to settle scores with the other group leading to violent behaviour. Instead if they were to first analyze the truth about the situation, then decide on the most result-oriented course of action, there would be more chances of finding solutions. With such controlled behaviour, the first benefit would be prevention of further loss. Immediate reactionary violence will cause harm to both the parties involved, and the worse aspect is that it does not solve the problem or compensate the loss. On the contrary it will escalate the matter further.

An individual is always governed by his thinking. That is why, if we have to make a nonviolent world for a peaceful society, there is only one way, and that is by using educative methods to convert people's thinking from violence to nonviolence, and to enable them to seek solution to matters of controversy through peaceful means. We must learn to understand the value of tolerance and avoidance as opposed to intolerance and confrontation. It is from such intellectual awareness alone that a nonviolent world and a peaceful society can be constructed. □

INTRINSIC REALITY

Never Outmoded

IT is earnestly claimed that religion has been rendered old-fashioned and redundant by modern civilization. But what actual contribution has western civilization made to humanity? New modes of travel, novel architectural designs, new means of communication, latest styles of clothes. In short, commodities and conveniences have become more luxurious, more glamorous, and more effective than ever before. The question we must ask ourselves is what the existence of such amenities has to do with belief in God and religion.

Does the possession of a modern house and a luxury car turn belief in God into a meaningless cipher? Do wireless modes of communication leave no room for belief in inspirational forms of revelatory transmission? Does the ability to fly in the earth's atmosphere and beyond preclude the possibility of an afterworld in the cosmos? Does the availability of gourmet food, high fashion clothes, and elegantly designed furniture reduce belief in the Garden of Paradise and the Fire of Hell to things of the ignorant past? Does the legislative capacity of certain individuals seated in grandiose parliament buildings invalidate the guidelines enshrined in the Holy Scriptures? While acknowledging the importance and utility of modern technology and its resultant amenities, we fail to comprehend in what way these things verify or negate religious truths.

The relevance of religion is its concern with fundamental values rather than with social manifestations. Social phenomena undergo constant changes, whereas the values of life are immutable. Although fast, modern forms of transport have replaced their slower forerunners, it does not mean that the ethics of vehicle manufacture and use are thereby invalidated. Modern means of communication may have rendered the older methods obsolete, but whether these facilities should be utilized to convey truth or falsehood is as pertinent a question as before.

Whether members of parliament go to work on foot or by helicopter does not alter the fact that they are bound to fashion laws in accordance with the Divine Order which rules the entire cosmos. Whether they are housed in huts or in magnificent buildings, judicial bodies are still bound to mete out justice by the same absolute standards so that the innocent are defended and the guilty punished.

Thus, religion comes out as an integral need for human beings. Study of Islam is a step for man to fulfil this need. Quran believed to be the word of God is pure and unaltered guidance for man from the Creator of the universe. Quran presents the creation plan of God. Accountability in the Hereafter is central to God's scheme. This concept gives meaning to our temporary lives in this world. The promise of a perfect world Paradise is in consonance with our desire for perfection and justice which cannot be fulfilled in this world. To be successful in the Hereafter we need to mould our lives which will be acceptable to the Almighty our Creator and Sustainer. □



FUTURE PLANNING

Be Ready with Plan B

IN her book titled, *'Option B'*, Sheryl Sandberg, COO (chief operating officer) Facebook, relates her personal experience about developing resilience amid life-shattering experiences. She says that two weeks after losing her husband in 2015, as she was preparing for a father-child activity, she cried to her friend saying, "I want Dave (her husband)." Her friend replied, "Option A is not available."

Life gives us two options, one temporary, the other eternal. The eternal option means doing something that continues to benefit you, even after you have ceased to exist. That is, your end in the physical sense, you continue to live in the ideological sense.

People generally set their goals out of zeal, but this is certainly not a mature way of making decisions. The better way to decide one's goal is to understand the realities of life, and then act in accordance with them.

The Creator has given to all in this world, albeit for a short period, an opportunity called life. And every person, in his limited lifetime, has unique experiences which are of eternal value. If a person understands his experiences and records them appropriately, this record stays intact even after his death and shall serve as a permanent lesson for the next generation.

Robert Clive was a young, educated British clerk in the East India Company. Being dissatisfied with his job, he once attempted suicide by aiming a revolver at his head and pulling the trigger. However, the gun misfired and he was saved. He then cried out saying: "Surely, surely I am reserved for

something great!" The turn of events in his life after this incident made him accomplish great tasks, and he went on to lead British India. He recorded this event in his life in the book *Life Stories*, thus giving a great gift to succeeding generations. This gift was a lesson: "If an accident takes place in life and it does not kill you, consider it as a blessing. Such an event implies that God has saved you for a higher purpose."

This lesson was further expounded by British historian Arnold Toynbee in his book, *'A Study of History'*. He holds that if a nation faces a challenge, which is non-crippling, it actually becomes a boost for the nation in terms of result—it prepares the nation for greater heights.

While recommending Sandberg's book, Malala Yousafzai said: "None of us can escape sadness, loss, or life's disappointments, so the best option is to find our Option B." In a nutshell, in the case of a life-changing event, we must not cling to the pursuit of Option A. We must instead pursue Option B and share our experiences and lessons with the world.

In relating her experiences, Sandberg has set an example of this principle. She has given a living gift to the next generation which shall continue for eternity. Her gift is that we must not pursue Option A (when it is not available), as that will always make us sad. We must instead choose Option B, so that we may be enabled to learn from experiences and move on.

Death does not mark the end of life. In the physical sense, it means an end but not in the ideological sense. Everyone has valuable experiences that he can share with others—we must discover these experiences and then record them for posterity, so that they may be an inspiration to others. Such a concept of life ensures that the journey of life is not one of frustration, but rather one of eternal hope.

Everyone has valuable experiences that he can share with others—we must discover these experiences and then record them for posterity, so that they may be an inspiration to others.

There is an English proverb, 'The end justifies the means'. Perhaps, there is another more relevant principle which may be expressed thus: 'The end justifies the beginning.' It is the end result that proves whether the beginning was right or wrong.

Many people begin their lives with great enthusiasm. But the latter period of their life proves that their beginning was not the right one. Their case was a case of miscalculation, rather than one of right calculation. For example, Greek emperor Alexander the Great was a very ambitious person. His goal was to conquer the world. But, his human limitations overcame him and he died at the age of 32 in Babylon, about 3,000 km away from his homeland. The same is true of Adolf Hitler who, likewise an ambitious man, rose to the position of Chancellor of Germany. Then he decided to rule the whole of Europe, for which he initiated a war which escalated into the Second World War. Yet, Hitler could not fulfil his dream, and committed suicide at the age of 56 in a bunker.

There are thousands of such examples. Many individuals start out in life with high hopes, but fail to achieve their goal, and then die in a

state of frustration. In the beginning they were hopeful, but in the end they died in a state of utter hopelessness.

'Right here, right now' is a formula of life that has gained popularity in the present age. This seems to be a beautiful formula. People have, in general, adopted this principle. Although in the beginning they are very happy, in the latter period of their lives they feel that they have been unsuccessful in achieving their goals. Finally, they fall prey to frustration and die of some fatal disease, and in a state where they have lost all hope and enthusiasm.

Happiness in the present is not the criterion of success. The right criterion is whether a person is able to maintain his happiness and sense of satisfaction right to the end of his life. The value of a tree is gauged by the fruit that it offers when it has reached the stage of full growth. Similarly, the right formula of life is that which can give a person satisfaction till the end of life, and not just for a temporary period.

A tree is known by its fruit, which is the final phase of the tree's life. Similarly, the pattern of human life will be judged by what it turns out to be in its final days. Never make the mistake of planning for life by taking only immediate gain into consideration. You should always plan by keeping the future in mind.

An individual should first of all discover his own self and then plan accordingly for his life. People generally set their goals out of zeal, but this is certainly not a mature way of making decisions. The better way to decide one's goal is to understand the realities of life, and then act in accordance with them. Failure to do so is the main reason for people dying in frustration after having set out full of enthusiasm. When they set themselves goals, it was under the influence of emotions, without due consideration. Such a plan does not work for long. It is like a sandcastle which is destined in the long run to fall apart. □



BELIEF IN THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

Putting a Check on Man

BELIEF in the Day of Judgment or the Day of Resurrection (*Qiyamah*) is a fundamental tenet of faith in Islam. It is also referred in the Quran as, "the Hour" (31: 34, 74: 47), "the Day of the Account" (72: 130), "Day of the Gathering", "Day of the Reckoning", "Day of Distress" (74: 9) and the "Great Announcement".

According to Islam the end of the world will come on Doomsday. On Doomsday God will unravel all veils. All things that were hidden and unseen from view will appear as clear as daylight. This will be the Day of Judgement when no action done in the world will remain hidden. Even a tiny good deed or bad deed done in the world will appear as plain as daylight. On this day, all virtuous human beings will be rewarded for their good deeds, whatsoever they may have been; and all corrupt and depraved people will be doomed for their bad deeds, whatsoever they may have been.

Referring to Doomsday or the Last Day, The Quran says:

When the earth is shaken with its violent shaking, when the earth shakes off her burdens, when man asks, 'What is happening to her?'; on that Day it will narrate its account, for your Lord has so directed it.

On that Day people will come forward in separate groups to be shown their deeds: whoever has done the smallest particle of good will see it; while whoever has done the smallest particle of evil will see it. (99: 1-8)

When the earthquake of Doomsday strikes, it will be a proclamation of the termination of the period of trial. This will mean that the freedom which people had been allotted for the purpose of them being tested has been taken away from them. Then the time will have come for people to receive their just desserts.

People eat, drink and make merry in this world. They establish themselves in comfortable homes. They seek to win promotion in life. They believe or reject matters at will. They are free to do and say

Nothing that man possesses will last. On the Day of judgement, everything will be taken away from him. He will be stripped of even the most basic of the worldly amenities he used to enjoy. He will be brought before the Lord of the universe to be judged.

what they like. They strive to excel in whatever department of life they choose.

Man has been deluded by his worldly position. He thinks that what he owns in this world will always be his. He forgets that he is being put to the test by means of all the power which he wields in this ephemeral world. Nothing that he has will last. Everything will be taken away from him. He will be stripped of even the most basic of the worldly amenities he used to enjoy. He will be brought before the Lord of the universe to be judged.

All disparity between men will disappear on the Day of Judgement. Fear of God will seal everybody's tongue. Injustice will benefit no one; truth will be inescapable. Man will stand alone, answerable for his actions.

Referring to the concept of accountability, the Quran says:

When the sky is cleft asunder; and when the stars are scattered; when the seas overflow; and when the graves are laid open: then everyone will know what he has sent ahead, and what he has left behind. O man! What is it that lures you away from your bountiful Sustainer, who created you, fashioned you and proportioned you, in whatever form He pleased? Yet you deny the Last Judgement. Surely, there are guardians watching over you, noble recorders, who know all that you do: the virtuous will dwell in bliss, whereas the wicked will be in Hell; which they shall enter on the Day of Judgement, and from which they will find no escape. What will make you realize what the Day of Judgement will be? Again: what will make you realize what the Day of Judgement will be? It will be a Day when no human being shall be of the least avail to any other human being, God [alone] will hold command on that Day. (82: 1-19).

People fail to realize that their own inadequacies should be their prime concern—not those of others. The only time they feel concerned with themselves is when their comforts, convenience, safety, etc, are threatened. Then they make strenuous efforts to see that these aspects of their lives should never be prejudiced in any way. But just as a hungry man thinks first and foremost of his own hunger, so should a moral, social being think first and foremost of his own conduct, and not of his own convenience, or of the faults of others. It will only be when the Day of Judgement is upon us and the Truth made plain that this realization will come to man. On that day will every man be held accountable for their deeds.

Therefore, linked to the belief in the Day of Judgement is the belief that man is accountable to God. He is being watched by God and his actions are being recorded by God's angels. Though he is free in this world, in the next, he will be held accountable for every thought, speech and action that he made in this world.

The Relevance of the Day of Judgement

The present world is full of strange paradoxes. Here, birds chant hymns of divine praise, while man recites eulogies to himself. Stars and planets continue their voyages without clashing with one another, while man willfully sets himself on a collision course with others. In this world there is no tree which undermines another, but men spend their lives plotting one another's destruction. Lofty, upright trees show their meekness by casting their shadows on the ground, but if man ascends to any heights he immediately becomes arrogant. This attitude of man's is totally contrary to God's Will for His entire creation. Doomsday shall erase these paradoxes, the might of all save God shall be eradicated.

When this period of trial has run its course, God will destroy the present world and create another one. There, the righteous and wicked will be separated from one another. The former will reside in Paradise and the latter in hellfire.

Today the world of God appears to be silent. But on the Day of Judgement, everything will be given the power of speech. Present day inventions and discoveries have proved that even lifeless objects have the power of "speech." Studio performances can be fully replayed by recording sets. Similarly, the present world is like a huge divine studio. Whatever man does or says is being preserved at every moment. And when the time comes, the story of everyone will be repeated in such a way that neither great nor small sayings and doings will escape God's attention.

We must foresee the coming of that day before its arrival. Those who fail to see it coming before it is upon them will have to pay dearly for their shortsightedness. They will have to endure the punishment of hellfire.

Man is being watched by God, and his actions are being recorded by God's angels. Though he is free in this world, in the next, he will be held accountable for every thought, speech and action that he made in this world.

It should be firmly embedded in his mind that he is under divine surveillance at every moment. The deeds of his entire life will be presented in the court of God.

Be these great or small, done secretly or publicly, everything will be there on record.

The present world may seem to lack nothing; but the order of this world has been established with the trial of man in mind. According to God's scheme, only a world which leads up to reward and punishment can be considered ideal and permanent. This is not the case in the present world. So, when the period of trial is over, God will destroy this world and create another more complete one. There the evil will be separated from the righteous, and all will be confronted with the just consequences of their deeds.

For the observance of proper behaviour in this world, man requires only one thing. It should be firmly embedded in his mind that he is under divine surveillance at every moment. The deeds of his entire life will be presented in the court of God. Be these great or small, done secretly or publicly, everything will be there on record.

If man is fully convinced of this reality, he will be shaken completely even before the shaking of the world. Before the all-encompassing earthquake of Doomsday he will experience an earthquake in his own soul which will change him completely. As a result, he will become his own keeper. He will adopt a disciplined life instead of a life of indulgence. He will use his powers as guided by the command of God instead of acting independently. □



**GUIDANCE FROM THE
PROPHET OF PEACE**

Faith is to restrain oneself against
all violence, let no believer commit
any violence.

HONESTY AND HARD WORK

Traits of Real Value

PROPHET Moses was born in Egypt, where he lived for about thirty years. Then, for some reason, he had to leave Egypt and after a long journey he reached Midian (Syria). When he was resting on the outskirts of Midian, an interesting incident took place which has been narrated as follows in the Quran:

When Moses arrived at the well of Midian, he found a group of men watering their flocks, and two women standing apart from them, holding back their flocks, he asked, "What is the matter with you?" They replied, "We cannot draw water until the shepherds take away their sheep. Our father is a very old man." So Moses watered their flocks and returned into the shade and prayed, "Lord, I am truly in need of whatever blessing You may send down for me." One of the two women came up to him and said, "My father is asking you to come to reward you for helping us." When Moses came to their father and introduced himself, he said, "Don't be afraid! You have escaped from those wrongdoing people." One of the girls said, "Father, hire him! For the best man to hire is someone strong and trustworthy." (28: 23-26)

Moses lived with his Midian hosts for almost eight years. His host, Shuayb married his daughter to Moses; then after eight years Moses returned to his homeland, Egypt.

What the woman said when she asked her father to hire Moses is the best formula for success. It is a two point formula—honesty and hard work. Honesty makes one a trustworthy person and hard work means that a man is ready to dedicate himself to his work.

'Strong' refers to physical strength and 'honest' refers to spiritual strength: both are equally important and desirable human qualities.

There is a saying: 'God helps those who help themselves.' What is self-help? Self-help means to prove that you have these two natural qualities—honesty and the ability to work hard. □



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ZERO-DEFECT UNIVERSE

Holding a Mirror to Human Affairs

SOME decades ago, the concept of 'zero-defect management' was propounded. A lot of literature was produced on the subject and considerable research was conducted on the issue. The concept spread rapidly in parts of the West, and major efforts were made to try to implement it. However, despite much effort, it came to be accepted that 'zero-defect management' isn't at all possible. It proved to be a failure!

But at around the same time as 'zero-defect management' in human affairs proved to be a failure, scientific research was proving that the system of nature that operates throughout the universe is based precisely on the principle of 'zero-defect management'. To take just one instance, the stars and the planets move in perfect precision. So, if you want to know at what time the sun will rise tomorrow and at what time it will set, you can get the exact information today itself, so accurate is the motion of Earth around the sun!

So, on the one hand, the idea of 'zero-defect management' in the human world proved to be a complete flop while, on the other hand, in the natural world it was shown that 'zero-defect management' operates in a perfect manner! So perfect is this management of the non-human world that we can know today itself that on 15th April 2025 in New Delhi, sunrise will be at 05:56 am and sunset at 18:46 pm!

One can get accurate information of sunrise and sunset for any other place in the world, too, well in advance. In the same way, the entire natural world is working in perfect order, as science reveals. Through various scientific disciplines we can get the information we want regarding such phenomenon for the distant past as well as distant future, and this information will be accurate, without any change.

Now, reflect on the fact that this material world is functioning under the management of the Creator. From its very inception it has been operating on the principle of 'zero-defect management'. In contrast to this is the human world, where man makes plans but things are always subject to change, modification and failure. For instance, an industrialist conceives a project, but no matter how hard he may try, he cannot implement the project in a zero-defect manner.

As they say, it is in comparison that you understand. Compare God's way of managing things with man's way. The Divine management that

orders phenomena in the non-human world is completely zero-defect. In contrast, human management is necessarily flawed, in some way or the other. From various verses of the Quran we gain inspiration to reflect on the difference between the two. This comparative study tells us there is a basic difference between them. In the human world, despite all our efforts there is and can be no zero-defect management. It is simply impossible. In contrast, in the natural world established and managed by God, zero-defect management prevails fully and throughout, and with complete accuracy.

When we reflect on this difference, we realize that there is a Creator of this universe who is All-Powerful and Perfect. The difference between man's world and the physical world, the world of the exact sciences, is a firm proof of God's existence. As the Quran (67: 3-4) tells us:

He created seven heavens one above the other in layers. You will not find any flaw in the creation of the Gracious One. Then look once again: can you see any flaw? Then look again and again. Your gaze will come back to you confused and exhausted.

Elsewhere, the Quran (50: 6) says:

Have they not observed the sky above them and marked how We have built it and adorned it, leaving no flaws in it?

This modern discovery of the system of the universe being flawless is proving one attribute of God to be true, and that is, in the words of the Quran: "God: there is no deity save Him, the Living, the Eternal One. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him." (2: 255) □



The highest spiritual goal for man is his spiritual uplift when he has attained the high state called "peaceful soul" in the Quran. This may also be termed as complex-free soul which can withstand all kinds of negativity.

MOTION AND DIRECTION

Make Your Efforts Result-oriented

BILL COPELAND, an American poet and historian, once commented, "You have removed most of the road blocks to success when you have learnt the difference between motion and direction."

One intrinsic quality of activity is movement. When you are walking, driving, riding a bicycle, galloping along on horseback or roaring along on a motorcycle, you are moving. But in what direction? Are you moving towards your destination, or away from it? The actual motion in both cases seems to be no different. The great difference between the two is that the former brings you ever nearer to your destination, while the latter takes you further and further away from it—leaving you where? Nowhere. At least nowhere that it is worth your while going. It is direction that is all-important. Even if we get on to the slow-moving bullock cart or a cycle rickshaw, we shall do better than an aeroplane which has no sense of direction.

Whether it is a consideration of private lives or social existence, it is imperative that we take stock of our means and resources and then set off in the right direction, if, sooner or later, we are to reach our destination.

Often people launch themselves on careers plunging headlong into them, without giving due thought to their actual capacities and to whether they have any real potential which can be developed. At times they are led astray by trivial considerations, ill-founded opinions, and over-whelming emotions, and rush heedlessly into whatever first comes their way. When the result is not what they had anticipated, they fall to complaining against others. They lament their losses and failures. They claim that it was due to prejudices of others that they had to suffer frustrations and that their careers had come to naught. Had they given more profound thought to the matter, they would have realized that the fault lay in their own ill-judged planning or even total aimlessness. Had they started out in the right direction, others would not then have had the opportunity to place obstacles in their path and turn their successes into failures. Aimlessness is a great weakness. It should be eschewed at all costs. In fact, no activity is of any value unless it is characterized by its direction and not just its motion. □



ONE LIFE NOT ENOUGH

The True World to Set Eyes on

WHEN Benjamin Gayelord Hauser (1895-1984) came to the US from Germany in 1911, he soon developed tuberculosis of the hip. Conventional medicine and several operations failed to cure him, so he turned to natural, herbal remedies. He was told to take warm baths, herbal teas, a diet of salads, fruit juices and vegetable soup. Within a few weeks he was cured.

He then devoted his life to promotion of herbal medicine. He opened an office in Chicago in 1923, and soon moved to Hollywood where many film stars and celebrities, including Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich and the Duchess of Windsor sought his advice. His books, including *“Look Younger, Live Longer”* and *“Harmonized Food Selection with the famous Hauser Body-building system”* were widely read throughout America and Europe, and were translated into more than 40 languages.

Hauser once said that he would like to live until he was 100 years old, and then return to earth as a psychiatrist. “I have spent this life being concerned with the garbage people eat,” he said. “The next time I will concentrate on getting rid of garbage thoughts.”

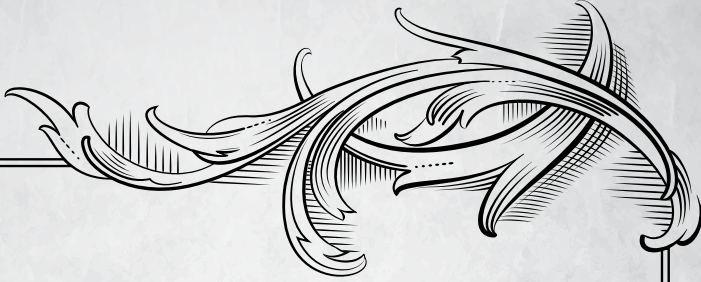
Yet Hauser, who had spent his life showing people how to “look younger, live longer” died, at the age of 89, on Wednesday, December 26, 1984, of complication from pneumonia. His efforts to look younger were not able to ward off old age and infirmity. The measures that he took to live longer were no protection from death. He died before he could reach his coveted 100-year mark.

People in this world achieve every form of success. Their names become known far and wide. Still no man is satisfied. Everyone wishes to add some new feather to his cap. Sometimes his ambitions in this world are so far-reaching that they cannot even be fulfilled in a life span of 100 years; another life on earth is required for their realization.

Man directs all his attention towards his temporary life on earth. He wants all his ambition to find fulfillment here. But the world of his dreams can never come to pass. Instead he will be raised up in an eternal world of infinite opportunities where no desire will go unfulfilled. But those who have worked only for this temporary world will find themselves bereft when they arrive in the Hereafter. They will find themselves in a world which they had not anticipated or made any preparations for.

They will have left the world in which they sought fulfillment of their ambitions far behind.

How sad that man is oblivious to the place where his desires can be fulfilled, and has set his heart on a world where he is doomed to disappointment. ❑



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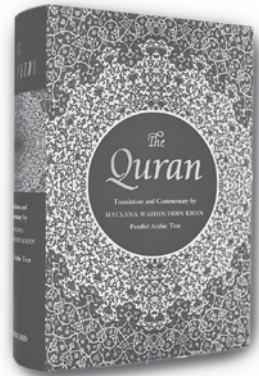


THE WORD OF GOD

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 AD 610 and 632. It is a book that brings glad tidings to humankind, along with divine admonition, and stresses the importance of man's discovery of the Truth on a spiritual and intellectual level.

Translated from Arabic and commentary by
Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



Who speaks better than one who calls to God and does good works and says, 'I am surely of those who submit'? Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend, but no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint—no one is granted it save those who are truly fortunate.

If a prompting from Satan should stir you, seek refuge with God: He is the All Hearing and the All Knowing. (41: 33-36)

The call of the Quran is to invite people to God. Bringing man closer to his Lord and Sustainer; making him spend his whole life in remembrance of God; developing a feeling in man that he should make the one and only God the centre of his attention—these are the real aims of the Quranic call and undoubtedly there is no call better than this.

But, only that person becomes the preacher of God who is so sincere in his call that he, first of all, accepts whatever he wants others to accept. Whatever he exhorts others to do, he should have himself started doing from the outset.

The greatest weapon of a preacher of Truth is his ability to treat people well. Even if people are not good to him, he should be good to them. He should adopt the policy of avoidance in the face of provocation or irritating behaviour, and exercise patience under trying circumstances. Almighty God has made it possible for unilateral good behaviour to be immensely persuasive. The preacher of God is aware of this God-given asset, and uses it to the utmost extent, even though it may involve crushing his own feelings and killing the urge to retaliate.

Whenever a caller to Truth has the feeling within him that it is necessary for him to retaliate against a particular instance of oppression in order to prevent the enemy from becoming so bold as to commit even greater excesses, he should immediately understand that this is a satanic inducement. It is the duty of every believer and preacher of Truth to seek the protection of God from such feelings instead of acting upon them.

Among His signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Do not prostrate yourselves before the sun and the moon, but prostrate yourselves before God who created them all, if it is truly Him that you worship. If they grow arrogant, [remember that] those who are with your Lord glorify Him night and day and never grow tired. (41: 37-38)

The greatest human blunder is having regard for outward appearances. In ancient times, the sun, the moon and stars appeared quite dazzling to man, so he took them as deities and started worshipping them. In the present age, it is the glamour of the material side of civilization which appears dazzling. So, materialism has now been given the same status as was enjoyed in former times by the sun and the moon, though the sun, the moon and other phenomena are all creations of God. A man should worship the Creator and not His creations.

The arrogance of the proud is not related to the call of Truth but to the preacher giving that call. It appears to the leaders of an age that the preacher of Truth is smaller in stature than themselves and that therefore the message conveyed by him is also of lesser import.

Among His signs is this: you see the earth dry and barren, but when We send down on it water, it stirs and swells: most surely He who gives it life is the giver of life to the dead; surely He has power over all things.

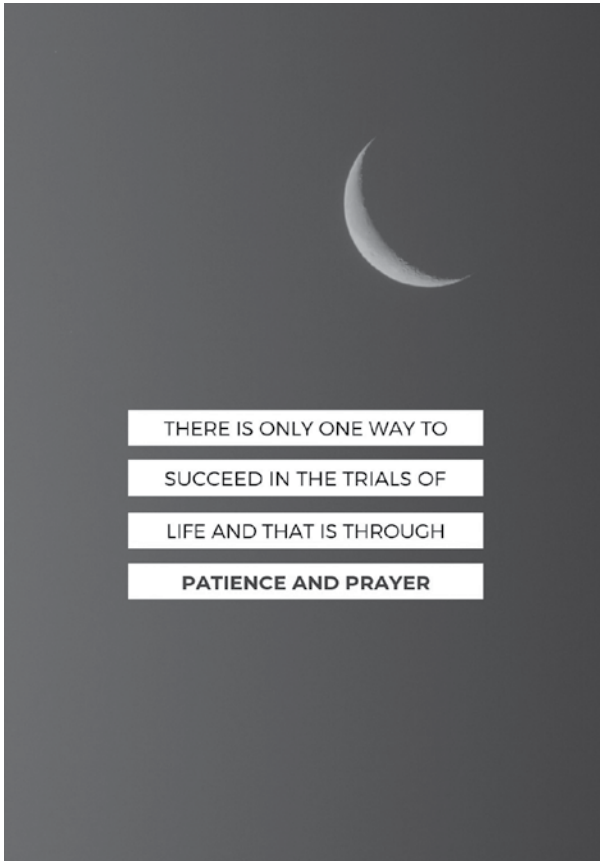
Those who distort the meaning of Our message are not concealed from Us. Who is better—someone who will be thrown into the Fire or someone who will arrive in safety on the Day of Resurrection? Do as you will, He sees whatever you do. (41:39-40)

The phenomena of rains soaking dry land and thereafter greenery sprouting from it are a regular occurrence. This is an allegorical reference to an inner reality. In this way man is informed that God has made extensive and elaborate arrangements in this world to refresh and invigorate his dry existence. The soil absorbs the water and allows it to percolate downwards, making the rainwater a source of

revitalization for it. Similarly, if man allows God's guidance to permeate his existence, he too will become rejuvenated upon receiving it.

The main reason for man's not benefitting from God's guidance is that he distorts God's message. When God's guidance comes to him, he does not take it as it is, instead he tries to ferret out some points in it which he may misrepresent. In this way, God's guidance does not become a part of his mind. It does not nourish his soul.

For those who accept God's guidance as it is, there is the reward of Paradise, and for those who distort its real meaning, there is the punishment of Hell. □



ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

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

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

Can Muslims and followers of other religions live peacefully considering the fact that wherever Islam exists there is always a potential for conflict?

There is conflict even between two members of a family. This is because conflict is inherent in human nature; it has got nothing to do with the religion one follows. If people have the right thinking and are able to tolerate, then peace will prevail. What we see in the media regarding Islam is an outcome of selective reporting which is meant to capture only sensational news, so that viewers can get interested. There are many societies and cultures around the world where interfaith harmony exists and a free secular atmosphere has been established.

How can trust be built between Muslims and other communities?

Trust does not happen simply by saying 'trust each other'. We have to remove the obstruction in this matter, which is negativity. The wisdom behind this is every person is free in this world to exercise their freedom. You too can use your freedom. If you want no unpleasant discussions to take place in the world and that only trust should remain, then you need to remove negativity for others from your heart. Once these negative emotions are removed, feelings of trust will blossom.

How should Muslims treat Non-Muslims living in Muslim countries?

Today we live in a world of equal citizenship. Any such categorization of people as Muslim or non-Muslim is wrong and no longer valid. So, a person is either an immigrant to a country or a citizen of the country. This is the universal norm and Muslim countries should also adopt this

principle. They should not differentiate people on the basis of religion, because this would be unacceptable to the modern mind.

Should we not encourage Muslims to open communication with other communities?

Yes, this is definitely required. When the Prophet went to Madinah, half of the population comprised of Jews. The direction of prayer for the Jews was not the *Kabah*, it was Jerusalem. The Prophet adopted the Jewish *qiblah* (direction of prayer) for the Muslim prayer as well. Today, education is secular and the state too is administered along secular principles. Muslims should accept this. If they do not change now, then they shall have to pay the price of being called backward.

Can a Muslim be secular?

Yes, first and foremost let us understand that secularism is not an anti-religious idea. There is a multi-volume encyclopaedia called *Religion and Ethics*. It is a compendium of the writings of some great scholars, and is considered to be a very authentic and authoritative compilation. There is an article on secularism in this book which runs into twenty pages. It says that secularism is another name for the policy of non-interference. Secularism in itself is not anti-religious, but rather it is following the principle of non-interference in matters of religion. A secular person is one who practises his own religion and does not interfere with the religious practice of other people. □



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