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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



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peace is a source of bilateral survival.**

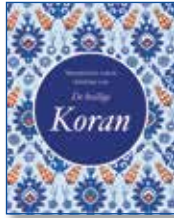
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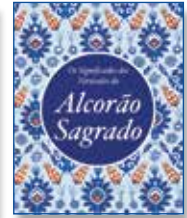
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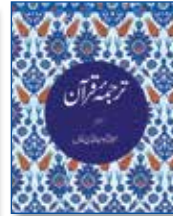
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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

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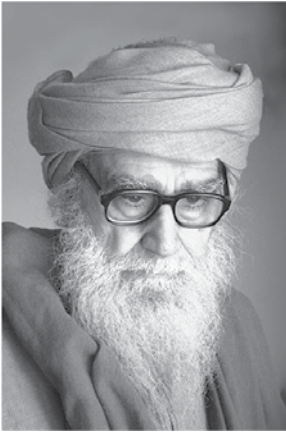
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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.

NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

The following is a report on a recent development in Sydney, Australia:

POLICE in Australia's most populous state will be allowed, under a proposed law, to shoot suspects in "terrorist-related" incidents, even if the attacker does not pose an imminent threat, New South Wales Premier, Gladys Berejiklian said yesterday. The change comes after a series of "lone wolf" Islamist-inspired attacks, the most serious of which raised questions about the traditional police strategy of "contain and negotiate" in hostage situations. Under the proposal, lethal force can be used immediately if an incident is declared "terrorist related" by the state's most senior police officer, Berejiklian told reporters in Sydney. Currently, police have to wait until a suspect demonstrates an imminent threat to others. Authorities said that the present law curtailed their ability to end a 2014 siege in Sydney's Lindt Cafe in which three people, including the hostage-taker were killed.

*("Oz cops get more teeth in terror fight", *The Times of India*, 9 June 2017)*

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

Another news report from Victoria is as follows:

In a move slammed on Thursday as troubling and wrong, an Australian Islamic council has called for taxpayer-funded “safe spaces” so young Muslims can express “inflammatory” views without fear. News of the request comes just days after a fatal shootout in Melbourne claimed by the Islamic State group, which is being treated as a terrorist incident.

In a submission to a parliamentary inquiry into freedom of religion, the Islamic Council of Victoria demanded funding for federal counter-terrorism and anti-extremism programmes be diverted to create the refuges. “Existing funding re-allocated to create safe spaces urgently needed by Muslim youth to meet and talk about a range of issues in emotional terms,” it said. “(A space) where they can be frank and even use words, which in a public space would sound inflammatory.”

Victorian state Premier Daniel Andrews said he was “very troubled” by any suggestion for safe spaces where Muslim youth “could be radical”. “There is no safe way to rail against the West,” he told reporters. “I am very troubled by the suggestion that we might have a space where people could be radical as part of a de-radicalisation programme. That makes no sense to me whatsoever.” He ruled out any funding for such an initiative.

(“Australian Muslims demand safe spaces to talk about Islamic issues”, *Hindustan Times*, 8 June 2017)

The above two news reports from Australia set me thinking about the present age and the role of Muslims.

Of all events of the twentieth century, the Second World War particularly stands out, as it was the worst event of destruction in the entire history of war. However, it also had a positive aspect, that is, after WWII the change in thinking that emerged led to the dawn of a new age of globalization. This age was characterized by a new dimension to tourism, global mobility between nations, opportunities for peaceful activity, unprecedented expansion of modes of communication, innumerable scopes for global interaction, an explosion in the desire for the quest of truth.

In these changed circumstances, a new historical phenomenon was witnessed. That is, people began to travel frequently to different countries. This scenario had a natural effect on Muslims as well. Earlier, Muslims had remained confined to their respective countries, but now they too began to migrate to other places. Today, Muslims are present in almost all the 196 countries of the world.

The modern age can thus be termed an age of diaspora for Muslims. Previously the Muslims had gone into diaspora after the death of the Prophet in 632 CE. They moved out of Arabia and spread out all over the inhabited world of that time. In these foreign lands, Muslims came as bearers of the divine message. Before the Prophet, Islam had been only a regional religion, but later it became an international religion—all this happened solely due to the seventh century diaspora of Muslims.

In earlier times, the Muslim diaspora had played a peaceful role in the regions they entered—that is, they took the message of Islam to the new populations they encountered. However, in the present age, the Muslim diaspora is performing a completely opposite role. Their activities have led to the spread of intolerance, hate, violence and even suicide bombing in the countries in which they reside. Some Muslims are engaged in all of this directly while others' involvement in this is indirect in that they do not openly condemn the heinous acts committed in the name of their religion. Although Muslims perpetrate these acts in the name of Islam, their actions are in truth only doing a disservice to Islam.

News of this “disservice to Islam” can be continually seen in the media. The latest news of this kind has come from Australia. The above-cited newsreport is very alarming for Muslims. Prior to this, everyone enjoyed complete freedom in Australia. But Australian Muslims, who had originally come as immigrants, imitated Muslims living in other countries by importing the “violent Islam” to Australia. As a result, to maintain peace the Australian administration took the decision to pass a new law which will give the police more power to curb violence.

This step from the Australian administration was quite natural according to the situation that presently exists there. Australia is a peace-loving country and desires a peaceful atmosphere to prevail. For this reason, in giving more powers to its police personnel to control terrorism, the Australian administration cannot be blamed for ignoring the plea of human rights violation.

As the media also states, the Australian Muslim leadership has made a very unwise plan against the backdrop of the violence that some Muslims have committed. They have demanded that the taxpayer money meant for counter-terrorism initiatives be used for creating spaces for Muslim youth to gather and talk about issues, even if it involves speaking in an inflammatory manner. This request would certainly be unacceptable to an administration which is working towards putting an end to the

menace of extremism, as fulfilling such a demand could be instrumental in further fuelling the radicalization of impressionable minds.

The Australian Muslim leadership's demand runs counter to wisdom. At the present moment, they should have unequivocally condemned the violence that the young Muslims have perpetrated. They should divert the Muslim youth to peaceful activities such as going ahead in education, participating in constructive activities and, most importantly, conveying the peaceful teachings of Islam to their countrymen. This is the solution to the problem of radicalism that the Australian Muslim community is currently facing.

Australian Muslims should live as peaceful citizens and not allow any separatism in the name of Islam. They must shun all forms of active and passive violence. It is in their best interest to live as a creative community in Australia and not a protestant community. This will be possible if Muslims become part of the national mainstream. This is the way to success for Muslims in Australian society. Any other path will only lead to destruction. □

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan
editor@thespiritofislam.org



Signs

*People see the signs, but pass
them by without detecting them.
One who has a prepared mind,
however is able to recognize them
and then turn them into objects of
contemplation.*

THE SECOND AGE IS COMING

Be Prepared

BRITISH astrophysicist Stephen Hawking has made a new documentary, *'Expedition New Earth'*, as part of the BBC's new science season *Tomorrow's World*. In the documentary, he claims that time is running out for Earth and if humanity is to survive climate change, asteroid strikes, epidemics and overpopulation we will need to leave our planet and venture further afield. In the landmark series, Prof. Hawking and his former student Christophe Galfard will travel the world to find out how humans could live in outer space. Humans, according to him, will need to colonize another planet within one hundred years to ensure their survival. ("*Tomorrow's World* returns to BBC with startling warning from Stephen Hawking—we must leave Earth," *The Telegraph*, 2 May 2017).

Stephen Hawking is considered a legendary physicist of the modern age. He gained worldwide fame after publication of his book *A Brief History of Time* in 1988. The above declaration by Prof. Hawking is a scientific warning for all human beings. As far as colonizing other planets is concerned, it seems to be science fiction in the light of current knowledge. However, the end of the present world has now become a scientific reality which will surely come to pass.

It is strange that this fact is present in the Quran in the form of a religious warning. According to religious history, the monarchs of ancient Egypt were called Pharaohs. Historical evidence shows that the Pharaoh Thutmose II ruled Egypt about 15th century BC. It was in this period that the Prophet Moses was born. At that time, Memphis was the capital of Egypt. The Prophet Moses went to Pharaoh's court and conveyed to him the divine message which God Almighty had sent him with. This story of Moses and Pharaoh appears in detail in both the Bible and the Quran.

*The present world
is a world of trial,
and for a certain
period God has kept
the realities hidden
in the realms of the
unseen. On the Day
of Judgement, this
curtain would be torn
asunder.*

According to the Quran, part of the message given to Moses to deliver to Pharaoh was: "The Hour is coming. But I choose to keep it hidden, so that every human being may be recompensed in accordance with his labours." (20: 15)

Prof. Hawking and other scientists have earlier also made such remarks. If the world we live in is reaching its end, then this is not great news. The greater news is that when this world comes to an end, another ideal world is going to come into existence. The Maker of the next world will not be a human being, but God the Creator Himself. In the world to come, only those persons will find entry who qualified themselves

All evidence points to the fact that the age of the present world is nearing the end and the age of the second world will begin very soon.

for it in the first world. People will be selected from entire human history and settled in the world hereafter, which in religious literature is called Paradise. Now, the time has come for every person to prepare himself and develop his personality so that he can be held a deserving candidate for Paradise.

According to the creation plan of God, the present earth is like a nursery where human beings are meant to be tested. The person who gives proof of noble conduct and sublime character—which is appropriate for the society of Paradise—will be chosen to settle in the eternal world of the Hereafter. This eternal world is a person's true abode.

All evidence points to the fact that the age of the first world is nearing the end and the age of the second world will begin very soon. At this juncture, the Quran is calling all mankind in these words: "And vie with one another for your Lord's forgiveness and for a Paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, which has been prepared for the God-fearing." (3: 133)

The present world is a world of trial, and for a certain period God has kept the realities hidden in the realms of the unseen. On the Day of Judgement, this curtain would be torn asunder. Thereafter, the second phase of man's life would start, when everybody would be judged according to their deeds in the present world. □



Prayer

*Prayer is not simply a set of rituals;
it is rather a way of acknowledging
God's greatness.*

THE ROLE OF DIFFICULTY

Totally Positive

IN his book, *Self-Help*, published in 1859, the Scottish author and reformer Samuel Smiles rightly observes: *'It is not ease but effort, not facility but difficulty that makes man.'* This statement is based on a natural fact and history has proved its veracity. All those men who attained greatness, regardless of which walks of life they came from, were the products of difficulty and not of facility. They faced challenges and emerged as superachievers.

But the question is, why is it that difficulty has a greater role to play in the building of a personality than facility. The reason is traceable to one of the laws of nature. It is this law of nature that is responsible for the making of a successful personality.

The fact is that all of our actions, big or small, are directly related to our minds. It is the mind that directs all the activities of our personality. The human mind is greater than all the great things of the universe; it has mind-boggling qualities. It is the mind that is the master of the human personality, as it controls all of our activities. Studies show that all our performances depend totally on our minds. The mind has unlimited reserves of energy. When we decide to do anything, the mind at once releases energy and we perform with the aid of this energy. The mind is the prime source of energy and whatever we do can only be done with the help of this energy. If we choose to do some easy task, then the mind will release a lesser amount of energy. And, if we decide to do some difficult or great task, then the mind will release a greater amount of energy.

Never complain to others. Try to utilize your own mind, and you will certainly achieve anything you want to in life.

The building of a personality depends on one's own efforts. If one is an easy-going person then he is bound to receive lesser energy from his mind and the result will be that his personality will become weak. If one is ambitious and chooses to embark on a great task, then certainly his mind will release a greater amount of energy, resulting in the development of a strong personality.

Everyone is born with the same mind that is full of energy. But some people fail to utilize their energy and die without developing their

personalities. The other kind of people are those who set a great task as their goal. Thus, their minds release a greater amount of energy for the performance of this task, and so they become superachievers.

Man himself is the master of his destiny. This saying is true, but not in any mysterious sense. It all depends on how much a person has unfolded his mind and how much energy the mind has released. One achieves greater or smaller successes in life depending on how much energy one's mind releases. Every man is a self-made man. But

It is the mind that is the master of the human personality, as it controls all of our activities. Studies show that all our performances depend totally on our minds.

the quantum of success depends on one's own planning. Wise planning makes one a superman, while unwise planning makes one lag behind in life.

The mind of a man is like a great water reservoir. Opening the gate of this reservoir depends on one's target. If one's target is ordinary then the mind will open the door of energy on a lesser scale. But, if the target is a high one, the mind will open the gate of energy on a higher scale. It is this difference that decides the level of one's achievement.

Never complain to others. Try to utilize your own mind, and you will certainly achieve anything you want to in life. □



Peace

Peace relates to 'means' and not to 'ends'.

All peace does is open up opportunities.

It is then up to people to avail of these opportunities to achieve their goals. Peace cannot present a person with what he desires. It is for the person himself to reach his goal through planning and struggle.

GUIDANCE FOR LIFE IN ISLAM

Voluntary not Coercive

THE statement ‘*Islam is a complete guidance for life*’ is both correct and incorrect. If this idea is taken in the sense of following Islam by one’s own choice, then it is true. However, if Islam is considered a complete system of life in the sense of enforcing it on others, then this would certainly be a wrong notion which finds no basis in the Quran or the life of the Prophet.

Islam: A Subject of Individual Following

For example, a verse in the Quran enjoins Muslims thus: “Believers, fear God, and say the right word.” (33: 70). This verse means that whenever a believer speaks, he should be cautious about saying that which is true and upright. But if the interpretation of the injunction given here is taken to be the establishment of a political system in which people are compelled to speak the truth and never utter anything that is improper, then this would be a self-styled interpretation, which finds no sanction in the Quran.

Similarly, at another place the Quran says: “When you speak, observe justice.” (6: 152). This verse speaks about a commandment that has to be adopted in one’s individual life. That is, as an individual a believer should always be honest in speech and should never say a lie. However, if this verse is taken to mean that Muslims are duty-bound to establish a political system which forces people to always speak the truth and never be dishonest, then this would be a self-styled understanding of the injunction to speak the truth. Such an interpretation has nothing to do with this verse of the Quran.

Another verse in the Quran reads: “Remain steadfast in religion.” (42: 13). Here the Quran is advising every individual believer to follow the divine religion in his life. If instead this verse is understood to mean that Muslims have been commanded to establish a state by force and to coerce people into abiding by the rules of this state, then this would again be a wrong meaning given to this verse.

Islam is a complete code of life, however, it is so in the sense of an individual following the religion of Islam in his life by his own choice. To take Islam to be a complete socio-political system that must be established in society at every level by the force of political power—is a wrong idea.

The Goal of Islam

The goal of Islam is not to establish by authoritative power a socio-political system in which people are forced into adopting the divine religion in their lives and from which they are allowed no deviation. On the contrary, the aim of Islam is to inculcate the love of God in every individual and make him a God-fearing person. This spirit is called *al-rabbaniyah* in the Quran and is described thus in one of its verses: *Kunu rabbaniyin*, which means: "Be devoted servants of God." (3: 79). Islam desires to instill this spirit of the love of God and the fear of God in every human being so that he can lead his life in its guidance in whichever situation he may be or wherever he may be.

According to Islamic teaching, the present world is a testing ground for individuals, it is not a place of enforcement of commands. In the present world, people are being put to the test to see whether they use their freedom to follow the straight path as determined by God or they deviate from it. Due to this reason, every human being has been granted complete freedom so that he may have the choice to either accept the divine religion or reject it. This reality about our present life has been stated in the Quran in these words: "Say, this is the truth from your Lord. Let him who will, believe in it, and him who will, deny it." (18: 29). Another verse instructs the Prophet with respect to his contemporaries who were in denial of his prophethood: "You are not a keeper over them." (88: 22). The Prophet is here counselled not to compel people to believe in the message he was conveying to them. For this reason, a principle has been mentioned in the Quran in clear terms: "There shall be no compulsion in religion: true guidance has become distinct from error. But whoever refuses to be led by Satan and believes in God has grasped the strong handhold that will never break. God is all hearing and all knowing." (2: 256)

Islam is a complete code of life, in the sense of an individual following the religion in his life by his own choice. To take Islam to be a complete socio-political system that must be established by the force of political power—is a wrong idea.

Divine Scheme of Things

A verse in the Quran sheds light on God's scheme of things for human beings. It speaks about the creation of the soul and says that God "then inspired it to understand what was right and wrong for it. He who purifies it will indeed be successful, and he who corrupts it is sure

to fail.” (91: 8-10). According to the creation plan, God has bestowed full freedom to man. Every human being has been given the opportunity to think as one chooses and to act accordingly. This divine scheme of things necessarily demands that every person enjoys full freedom. Thus following a particular religion—whether it provides a complete or an incomplete code of life—is a choice that rests solely with the individual and cannot be compulsorily imposed on the individual from outside by anyone else. Making a person conform to particular set of commandments or regulations by force is tantamount to interfering with the scheme of things God has chosen for human beings. Anything which goes against the law of nature set by God for the present world is doomed to fail.

The concept of Islam being a complete code of life which has to be imposed on people will always yield counter-productive results. Those who believe in this notion and try to forcibly implement it in society will turn Islam, a religion of well-wishing for others, into a religion of enmity and hatred.

Counter-productive Results of the Political Interpretation of Islam

When Islam is portrayed as a complete system of life, it immediately brings to mind the point that some or the other group has already put in place a certain system in society. The group that possesses political power in a society has adopted the law or rule of conduct which it considers proper. Now those who regard Islam as a complete system of life would wish to have full control over all the systems and structures of a society. These people would then realize that in order to have such control, they would need to take political authority and power in their hands. They would thus turn their attention to grabbing political power from the hands of those who are currently in possession of it. Working towards this would hold the foremost importance for them. This is the main cause for why reform of the self initially acquires a secondary place in the minds of such persons and gradually they cease to accord it even minimal importance. They become obsessed with the concept of changing the external system instead of bringing about a change within their own individual selves. Viewed

The concept of Islam being a complete code of life which has to be imposed on people will always yield counter-productive results. Those who believe in this notion and try to forcibly implement it in society will turn Islam, a religion of well-wishing for others, into a religion of enmity and hatred.

from this perspective, the idea of Islam being a complete system of life produces counter-productive results. Such an interpretation of Islam can only foster an atmosphere of hatred and violence.

The notion that Islam is a complete and comprehensive religious system is quite famous among present-day Muslims. Apparently, this interpretation presents Islam as a complete religion, however, the truth is that it is an incomplete interpretation of Islam. This is because according to this interpretation, Islam is reduced to a kind of a manual. Even if a manual were considered comprehensive, it can, by its very nature, take into consideration only a partial aspect of a human being. A manual can be complete only for a robot, not a human being. This is because a human being is essentially a thinking animal. Any kind of manual can serve to fulfil only the physical needs of a human being, however, the greater intellectual aspect of a human being can never be encompassed in a manual.

Islam: A Continuous Thinking Process

According to the creation plan, God has bestowed full freedom to man. Every human being has been given the opportunity to think as one chooses and to act accordingly. This divine scheme of things necessarily demands that every person enjoys full freedom.

Islam is not complete in the sense of a manual on paper, but rather it is complete when it is understood as a continuous thinking process. True Islam is one that creates an intellectual storm in the mind of a person and thus initiates a continuous thinking process. Such an understanding of religion develops creativity through which one is able to discover novel aspects of God's wisdom and understand the higher realities of life. In every experience or observation that one has, one is able to extract divine food for oneself.

Two verses from Chapter 3 of the Quran are helpful in illustrating the above point. This passage describes those who reflect on and ponder over the world around them: "There are signs in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day for people of understanding; who remember God while standing, sitting and [lying] on their sides, and who ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth, saying, 'Lord, You have not created all this without purpose. Glory be to You! Save us from the torment of the Fire.'" (3: 190-91). Here believers are defined as "people of understanding". These are the people of faith who engage in reflection and contemplation of the world and the universe. They are thus able to discover God's

signs when they observe God's creation. In this way, their awakened minds derive spiritual learning from their study and observation of the natural world. This intellectual process develops in them, what is called in the Quran, "a purified personality". (20: 76)

For example, consider a person who goes to bed after his long day's work. This is the time when he begins to introspect over what happened during the day. He reflects over his actions and tries to figure out whether they were proper or improper. When he thinks of a good deed that he may have done, he is filled with thankfulness to God, but if he realizes that he made a mistake somewhere, he feels repentant. So before going to sleep, he would pray to God to forgive him for his wrong actions and make a promise not to commit the same mistake in the future. This is how the person ends his day.

Now when he wakes up in the morning, he observes the morning prayer and then leaves for office. Here he faces several kinds of situations. In every situation, he tries to extract spiritual food for himself. For example, when he converses with someone over the phone while in office, experience of being able to instantly communicate with people who are at great distance from him makes him profoundly grateful to God. He realizes that long distance communication is possible only because God has made nature in such a manner that human beings can utilize it as a tool for their various activities.

When such a person sits outside his room in the balcony, he observes various natural phenomena—the sun shining brightly, the air supplying him oxygen, the clouds raining down freshwater after the entire process of desalinating seawater, the soil providing different essential nutrients, and much more. His mind gets triggered when he beholds the spectacle of nature before him. Then he sees that there are also several cars continually going up and down on the roads. Since these cars represent human planning and management at work behind them, the numerous meaningful activities happening in nature must also surely have a mind behind at work. Thinking in this manner, he comes to the conclusion that the world of nature has a Super Mind which is perfectly controlling all its affairs. This thought makes him recognize the Creator and gives him conviction in His existence.

The above illustration helps explain in what sense Islam is a complete religion. Islam is complete not in the restrictive sense of a manual. The truth is that Islam is the name of high thinking based on discovery of the Creator. Such kind of intellectual activity provides spiritual food to a believer in every circumstance throughout his life. □

THE POLICY OF DELINKING

Finding sure Solutions

THE British educator E.E. Kellet (1864 - 1950) writing about the Prophet Muhammad in his book, *A Short History of Religions*, observes, 'He faced adversity with the determination to wring success out of failure.'

What was the method which led the Prophet to this unusual success? It was adherence to the policy of delinking two issues. An example of this policy is in 610 CE, when the Prophet Muhammad began his mission in Makkah, a town of Arabia, to propagate the ideology of monotheism—belief in the one God and worshipping Him alone. It was the first quarter of the seventh century and in those times the Arabs were mostly polytheists.

Four thousand years prior to this, the Prophet Abraham had built a mosque in Makkah in which to worship the one God. It is this mosque which is called the Kaaba. But, in later periods, people belonging to various Arab tribes began to worship other deities in Kaaba until, finally, every prevailing tribe had their own deity, so that there were a total of 360 deities within the precincts of the Kaaba.

Wisdom demands that before embarking on a mission, a person should review the situation in a dispassionate way, and refrain from launching oneself on a course of action with an eye only on the problems, for this goes against nature.

From the point of view of his mission, this was the greatest issue faced by the Prophet Muhammad. Instead of taking steps which would have resulted in a violent confrontation with the custodians of the Kaaba, the Prophet analyzed the situation dispassionately and came to the conclusion that the prevailing situation there had a positive side to it. As different tribes of Arabia would come to Makkah all year round to worship their deities, almost on a daily basis in and around the Kaaba, there would be gatherings of substantial numbers of people. The Prophet

Muhammad adopted the policy of delinking two issues: the worship aspect and the gathering of people there. He decided to temporarily ignore the first issue and to avail of the gathering of visitors there as an audience for his mission.

The Prophet adhered to this policy of delinking for a period of thirteen years, until finally a substantial number of Makkans became

his companions. It is this wise strategy which has been described by E. E. Kellet in these words: *He faced adversity with the determination to wring success out of failure.* In other words, the Prophet adopted this principle for his mission: *Ignore the problems, avail the opportunities.*

The principle adopted by Prophet Muhammad in Makkah was not, in fact, a religious principle. This principle was based rather on the law of nature. According to the general law of nature, this principle applies to everyone, whether one's mission be religious or secular.

The truth is that, according to the law of nature, in every situation two things exist at the same time—problems and opportunities. It is not possible that problems will exist and opportunities will not. That is why wisdom demands that before embarking on a mission, a person should review the situation in a dispassionate way, and refrain from launching oneself on a course of action with an eye only on the problems, for this is a way which goes against nature.

The principle of delinking helps a person to save oneself from opting for violent methods and utilizing peaceful means to achieve one's goals.

In this world the only practicable method is that which is based on positive planning: that is, ignoring the problem and discovering the opportunities present, and availing of them. This is realistic planning. And in this world, realistic planning alone is successful so far as the result is concerned.

In present times, those who are involved in violence show that they are unaware of the principle of success based on the policy of delinking. Since these people are going against the law of nature, they can never be successful in this world. They are fated only to carve out a history of destruction. They can never create a history of progress and development. The eternal law of the Creator for this world is that the way of violence never works and that only the way of peace is feasible.

Result-oriented action is that which is based on peace. The method based on violence will always fail, just as a farmer would be unsuccessful if he dropped a bomb on his field expecting lush green vegetation to flourish there. □

***Result-oriented
action in this world
is that which is
based on peace. The
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violence will always
be a failure.***



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.



PEACE IS POSSIBLE, BUT ONLY THROUGH THE RIGHT WAY

IF your house is on fire, you will immediately get into action to try to put out the flames. Now, there are two ways of doing this. The first way is to act according to the principles that the Creator of this universe has set for dousing a fire. The other way is that, overwhelmed by emotions, you try out some other method, a method of your own making.

You are free to choose either of these two methods. But the results of the two are not the same. God has set pouring water as the method for putting out a fire. You cannot extinguish a fire by pouring fuel on it. If you do that, it will only add to the fire.

The same holds true for other challenges in life. If God has made patience the secret of success in this world of His, you cannot attain success through impatience. If God has made positive action the means to arrive at a particular result, you cannot hope to get there through fiery speeches, angry rhetoric and inflammatory statements. If God has established pragmatism as the solution to worldly problems, you cannot get what you want through emotionalism. If God has placed the secret of reform and progress in the silent transformation of individuals, you cannot hope to progress by stirring up agitation

If God has established pragmatism as the solution to worldly problems, you cannot get what you want through emotionalism.

and strife. If God wants us to get ahead in life by acknowledging our mistakes, you cannot advance by trying to prove others to be criminals and yourself to be faultless. If God has established a rule that if you want to pluck a rose, you can do so only if you steer clear of the thorns, you won't be able to obtain the rose if you start fighting against each thorn that you come across.

This world is a place for us to be tested. This is why every human being has been given the gift of free will. But this freedom is of action alone, and not that of obtaining results or the fruits of our actions. Undoubtedly, we are free to do whatever we like to, but we have not been given the power to acquire the results that we seek. One is free to choose whether to dive into the sea or not, but the one who does not know how to swim, does not have the power to stop himself from drowning. One should remember that this world is merciless when it comes to accepting useless excuses, no matter how beautifully one might seek to embellish them.

The fact of the matter is that we do not live in a world of our own making. Instead, this world has been made by God. We can obtain what we seek only if we live in accordance with the principles that God has put into place that govern the universe. If we deviate from these principles, we cannot get anything positive at all. The devastating results of the merciless violence engaged in by terrorists is ample proof of this fact. □

If God has made patience the secret of success in this world of His, you cannot attain success through impatience.



After making a mistake

When you make a mistake, do not take it as a negative experience. Take it rather as a process of nature. Nature wants to activate your thinking, so that your state of mind, if formerly uncreative, is now blessed with creativity. In all human progress, it is this process that is the most effective.

THE POWER OF WILL POWER

Will not Wish

IN Kigali, the capital city of Rwanda in Central Africa, 'an immigrant', a Gujrati Indian had a cloth shop. This gentleman's story of success was unusual and motivating. One could never guess during their interaction that behind this gentleman's fluent English there was ignorance of the English language.

How did it happen that he could speak good English with all his English speaking customers? This business-man initially was compelled to try to speak in English to his customers even if they were just a few words, to do his business. During the early days his English was far from correct. One day someone said to him, "If you are not in a position to speak correct English, why are you trying to speak in English?" The shopkeeper simply replied, "I speak incorrect English so that I may be able to speak correct English."

Strong will makes you able to learn from experience, and it is a fact that for a sincere person, experience is a successful teacher.

And so it came about. In two years' time, he was able to deal with his customers in the English language. He became fluent in English as a means of communication, and for a shopkeeper that was quite good enough.

This success story bears out the old saying, 'Where there's a will there's a way'. If you have a strong enough will to achieve something, you will do so, sooner or later. Strong will itself is like successful schooling. Strong will makes you able to learn from experience, and it is a fact that for a sincere person, experience is a successful teacher.

Studies of the human brain tell us that it contains numerous windows. Some are open and some are closed. It requires a compelling situation to open the closed windows of the mind. If one has a shocking experience and takes it quite seriously, that will automatically open those closed windows of the mind. This process can sometimes bring about miracles: a person can then play a role that was unimaginable prior to that experience. This principle can be applied to almost every situation, big or small. Anyone can perform a miracle, the only condition being that he should have the capacity to turn the shocking moment to good account.

In psychology there is a theory that is called the brainstorm theory which explains such abnormal events. According to psychological studies, when there is a shocking experience, there is a storm in the human brain. This brainstorm activates the dormant cells of the mind, and the result is that one becomes capable of doing what one could not have accomplished in a normal situation.

There are numerous examples in history that confirm this theory. One Indian example is that of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956). He was born into a poor family considered as, 'untouchables' in those times. As a boy, he found himself rejected in his own society. This sad experience was very strong, but he decided to overcome this situation. After much hard work, he successfully completed his education, and finally emerged as a great mind. After Independence he was appointed as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution.

What is imperative in such a situation is that one who faces such adversity should not become demoralized, but should try to overlook other people's behaviour towards him, so that he may unfold his own potential. Soon he will find that he is at the top of the ladder of achievement.

The will, if it is strong, can unfold one's hidden potential. But there is a difference between willing and wishing. Do not follow any unrealistic wish; follow your true will and you will be able to add your name to the list of superachievers. □

The will, if it is strong, can unfold one's hidden potential. But there is a difference between willing and wishing. Do not follow any unrealistic wish; follow your true will and you will be able to add your name to the list of superachievers.



Silence

*In silence we find ourselves
in the unlimited vastness of
the universe.*

EXTENDED COMPANIONSHIP

Through Contemplation

THE Prophet of Islam was born in 570 CE at Makkah and died in 632 CE at Madinah. The Muslims, of that time who were the Prophet's Companions, are called *Sahaba* (Companions). The number of his Companions was about one lakh twenty four thousand. The lives of Companions are well recorded in the books of '*Rijal*'.

But the number of Companions is not limited to those whose lives have been recorded in these Arabic books. There are companions other than those physically present during the Prophet's life time, they may be called the spiritual companions of the Prophet, and are spread throughout the whole of human history.

Who were these spiritual companions? They were those honest people who were born as seekers of truth. Then they discovered the Prophet through further study, and decided to follow the pattern of his life.

The spiritual companions of the Prophet were those honest people who were born as seekers of truth. Then they discovered the Prophet through further study, and decided to follow the pattern of his life.

Their sole concern was to understand the example of the Prophet and then sincerely follow it. Some of those spiritual companions may be called "companion plus." They were in a position to know more regarding the life and history of the Prophet of Islam in greater detail which was naturally not available to the believers of the early period. These historical details were recorded in the books of *Hadith* (sayings and deeds of the Prophet of Islam) and *Seerah* (life of the Prophet) in the later periods of Islamic history.

People of this kind are bound to receive continuous inspiration from God Almighty.

This will enable them to develop their personality on prophetic lines. Such people will remain continuously in touch with the Prophet in a spiritual sense.

Although the Prophet of Islam died in 632 CE, his guidance will continue forever. In the physical sense, the Prophet of Islam is no more, but in the spiritual sense he exists like a living personality. Anyone who is eager to receive his guidance can receive it through study and contemplation. □



A DANGEROUS PHENOMENON

Predicted by the Prophet

During the last days there will appear some young people who will not be intelligent. They will apparently speak well and read the Quran, but their faith will not go beyond their throats.

(Sahih al-Bukhari)

THERE is a point in this *Hadith* that appears between the lines. Understanding this hidden point will help us to comprehend the actual meaning of the *Hadith*. What is mentioned in the *Hadith* as a prediction by the Prophet is that in the future the world will have opportunities which will give people the chance to become popular and to occupy high positions at a very young age. This will happen despite lack of adequate knowledge and experience amongst those people.

The present age is precisely the one that has been predicted in this *Hadith*. Analysis of the present age indicates the conditions which give rise to this phenomenon such as the media, stage, freedom of speech, democracy, abundance of wealth, politics, showmanship, and presence of gullible followers.

Today, it is clearly visible how these new phenomenon has given some people the opportunity to garner high positions despite lacking the necessary abilities. Such people despite being superficial, have acquired popularity among the public through external demonstration. These are the people who, bereft of the Quranic spirit, have won fame simply through their impressive talk. Not fearing God and being unmindful of the Hereafter, they have won a big following through speeches which are popular among the masses. All of these are because of the new possibilities that were created in the modern industrial age.

One should be wary of this phenomenon and choose carefully whom they wish to follow. One should personally read and understand the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet, be a keen observer of the times and think objectively. If one does not develop intellectually then there is every chance of following the aforementioned people blindly which will result in failure. □



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



GOD'S WRATH AND HIS MERCY

WRATH is an attribute of God, and so is mercy. If someone thinks that God created man in order to make man experience His wrath, this would definitely be an underestimation of God. It is more correct to say that the reason why God created man was to make him experience His mercy. It is this understanding that is in accordance with God's glory.

This fact is brought out in a *Hadith* as follows: "God has said, 'My mercy surpasses My anger.'" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*). Another *Hadith* relates: "God has said, 'My mercy prevails over My anger.'" (*Musnad Ishaq ibn Rahwayh*)

A father possesses a sense of what is called 'fatherliness' for his son. His fatherliness causes him to take responsibility for his son's mistakes and to seek to prevent his son from facing their consequences.

This very attribute is found in the Creator too, and in an infinitely larger way. On the basis of this attribute, just as God's mercy overcomes His wrath, when God's servant thinks of his merciful Creator, his hope overwhelms his fear. Such a person hopes that his merciful Creator will take care of his mistakes and will save him from having to face their consequences.

This understanding of life leads a person to always fear accountability in the Hereafter on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to always remain hopeful with regard to his Creator. This reality is referred to in the Quran in these words: "...they called on Us in hope and fear." (21: 90) □



Prejudice

*When one is prejudiced
against something one cannot
see its rationality even if there
are clear signs in support of it.*

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CONFIDENCE; NOT OVERCONFIDENCE

Harm of Excess

CONFIDENCE is good, but over-confidence is bad. Confidence is very important in life for everyone. But when a person becomes over-confident, he takes such great risks as are beyond his capacity to deal with successfully. It is like fighting against the laws of nature.

Why does a person become over-confident? The reason lies in over-assessment of his capabilities. Sometimes people rate their competence too highly and plunge into situations that are beyond their control.

One historical example is that of the wrong decision-making of Napoleon Bonaparte, the erstwhile Emperor of France. He used to say that the word 'impossible' was to be found only in the dictionary of fools. This was sheer over-confidence and led him into the ill-conceived attempt to invade Russia in the winter of 1812. The Russian army at that time was not very strong, but they had the advantage over the French

According to the divine scheme of life, any achievement is a result of two factors—one's personal planning and support by the external world. The share of personal planning is less than fifty per cent while the share of outside factors is more than fifty per cent.

army of being able to cope with the severity of their winter, whereas the severe cold of that region proved fatal for Napoleon's army. The extreme cold accompanied by hailstorms caused most of the French soldiers to perish even before entering Moscow.

The same happened with Adolf Hitler, the dictator of Germany. It was his belief that he was destined for success. He thought he was invincible. Deluded by this obsession, he invaded Russia in the winter of 1941. His army too was caught up in a hailstorm and was crushed at Stalingrad. Over-confidence generally leads people into misadventures, which can be fatal to both nation and individuals. In this world, no one is so strong as to court disaster with impunity.

According to the divine scheme of life, any achievement is a result of two factors—one's personal planning and support by the external world. The share of personal planning is less than fifty per cent while the share of outside factors is more than fifty per cent. It is this fact which makes over-confidence untenable in this world. People, thanks to their obsessions, take into account only their own planning, generally

ignoring external factors. Unable to foresee future developments, they indulge in unrealistic thinking, which eventually proves fatal. Most of the people who are prone to this kind of thinking risk being failures.

Yet another example is that of an educated person who was in a good government job developing his political ambitions, he resigned from service and threw himself into the arena of politics. This adventure proved to be beyond his capacity and he was defeated in the elections. He lost both his government service and the assembly seat.

Then there is the question of how one can cope with over-confidence. The method is very simple. Before taking a decision, discuss the matter objectively with other people who are well-informed and when it is proved that you are about to take a step in the wrong direction, accept the reality and admit your mistake.

Over-confidence is a common flaw in the character of those who are lacking in humility. The virtue of modesty makes you a realist—a person who is cut down to size. Such people generally proceed with caution because, before taking any action, they take into consideration all of the factors in whatever situation they have to tackle and make a thorough assessment of the risks involved. Taking this realistic approach prompts them to take into account their own shortcomings. This serves as a controlling element in their lives and prevents them from having to face untoward consequences.

Over-confidence is a common flaw in the character of those who are lacking in humility. The virtue of modesty makes you a realist—a person who is cut down to size.

Overconfident people remain wrapped up in their own thoughts. They know themselves but are unaware of the lives of others. From inside their own cocoon, they are unable to draw upon others' experiences and develop the kind of inward-looking attitude which can be highly damaging to all concerned.

There is a saying that, the young man sees the rule and the old man sees the exception. With a slight change, one can say that the overconfident person sees the rule and the confident person sees the exception. Overconfident people are always more likely than others to take risks. They hold that risk-taking is good. They say: "No risk, no gain." But taking a risk must be a well-calculated move, otherwise it could lead to disaster. □



SPIRITUALITY VERSUS POLITICS

One Essential other Situational

ACCORDING to the Quran, spirituality should be everyone's primary concern and politics, or political power, is based on the availability of the opportunity for it. This order of priority is made very clear in the Quran. For example, in the chapter *Al-Saff* (Ranks), the Quran says:

He will give you another blessing which you desire: help from God and imminent victory. Give good tidings to believers! (61: 13)

This Quranic verse mentions that God will give many other blessings to believers. According to Quranic teachings, spirituality is a vast subject, covering almost all the non-political affairs of life. Believers must therefore make every effort to attain spirituality, while relegating politics to a subsidiary role.

According to Quranic teaching, a believer must adopt spirituality as his goal. He should shape his life by adhering to spiritual principles and applying spiritual norms in all aspects of his personal life.

The goal of spirituality is to gain a seat in eternal Paradise of the world hereafter, while politics is basically a worldly affair.

Drawing the line between what is spiritual and what is purely political is essential and it should be borne in mind that spirituality is a target that is achievable in every situation, provided you are sincere and determined to achieve spirituality. It needs only one thing—and that is willpower. This goal must be attained regardless of whether conditions are favourable or unfavourable.

But the case of political power is quite different. As compared to spirituality, politics is a bilateral or a multilateral issue. There are always two parties and a number of political rivals. So, if you want to make political gains, you have to overwhelm the other party or rivals. This means that confrontation is inherently a part of politics; without confrontation there is no politics. But confrontation breeds hatred and sometimes leads to violence. Indeed, having a political target is quite against the Quranic spirit.

According to the Quranic scheme, one's principal endeavour should be to lead a spiritual life and then try to spread the spiritual message to

others. One may engage in spiritual activities, provided they are strictly non-political.

The real part of a believer's life is spirituality, while politics is quite subsidiary. This means that spirituality is required in every situation, at every stage in life, but politics is required only when the situation calls for it. If there is a society that is ready for its affairs to be administered according to Islamic teachings, then believers can go into politics.

In other words, spirituality is a matter for the individual's choice, while politics comes into the picture only when society is prepared for this, i.e. when society itself wants to be governed according to Islamic teachings.

As far as social or national affairs are concerned, their management or governance must be determined by democratic means, through free and fair elections. Spirituality and politics must both refrain from encroaching upon others' fields.

The goal of spirituality is to gain a seat in eternal Paradise of the world hereafter, while politics is basically a worldly affair. It is for society to adopt a political system by its own decision. □

Spirituality is a vast subject, covering almost all the non-political affairs of life. Believers must therefore make every effort to attain spirituality, while relegating politics to a subsidiary role.



Friendship

The principle of friendship is very simple. If you are truly friendly towards others, then you can safely predict that they will also be friendly towards you. Develop genuine love for others in your heart and then others cannot but love you in return.

REASONING

Highest Mental Faculty

IN answer to a question the Prophet Muhammad said: "Seek the answer from your heart" (*Musnad Ahmad*). From this answer we learn that the Prophet has guided us towards using common sense for discerning the demands of faith.

Islam is a religion of nature. And so, whatever is in accordance with the demands of nature will also be considered part of Islam. For instance, every person loves his or her parents. They think this is in accordance with religion, although nowhere is it written in words in the Quran and *Hadith* that one must love one's parents.

An Islamic scholar during a discussion disagreed about the example of love for parents being not mentioned in the Quran. He cited the following quranic verse to support his disagreement.

Logical reasoning is a way of reasoning that is accepted by both the speaker and the listener, and is not a one-sided hypothetical claim of the speaker.

Your Lord has commanded that you should worship none but Him, and show kindness to your parents. If either or both of them attain old age with you, say no word of contempt to them and do not rebuke them, but always speak gently to them. (17: 23)

The above verse does not prove his claim. The commandment that is contained in this verse is not about loving one's parents, but, rather, about dealing kindly with them, that is, fulfilling all of one's moral duties towards one's parents. It is a case of illogical reasoning

to derive a commandment of loving one's parents from a verse that refers to ethical behaviour.

What is logical reasoning? It is but another name for correct reasoning. Reasoning that is based on facts, in which while making an assertion, the distinction between what is relevant and what is not, is clearly made. Logical reasoning is a way of reasoning that is accepted by both the speaker and the listener, and is not a one-sided hypothetical claim of the speaker. Logical reasoning is founded on certainty, not conjecture. It is completely free of emotion-based thinking. It is characterized by completely objective thinking. And it is only logical reasoning that is correct reasoning.

For further understanding of using correct reasoning we need to know two other types of reasoning; academic and speculative.

Academic reasoning is reasoning that is based on some proven fact. For instance, if you say that the goal of Muslims is calling people to God, and that hence what Muslims should do is to bear witness for God's religion before all mankind, it would be an instance of academic reasoning. It will be accepted that this statement is based on a genuine foundation, because there are Quranic verses that support this reasoning (2: 143; 12: 108). These verses unambiguously prove this as the goal of Muslims or the Muslim *ummah*.

Some claims are based on reason, while some others are based on scripture. If a claim is based on reason, in order to prove that it is right, it is necessary to offer a rational proof which, through rational analysis, shows it to be a proven fact. Similarly, if a claim is over something related to scripture, it is necessary that it be unambiguously and clearly derived from the authentic scriptural sources—the Quran and *Sunnah*.

In speculative reasoning, a point is sought to be proved on the basis of a certain hypothesis. For example, someone makes the claim that the aim of Muslims is to acquire global political rule, and then, on the basis of this claim, launches a movement aiming at this global political rule.

This sort of reasoning is speculative reasoning, and because of this, its status is baseless. This is because nowhere in the entire Quran is it mentioned that the goal of Muslims is global political rule and that, therefore, Muslims should seek to acquire global political rule.

Islam is a religion of nature. And so, whatever is in accordance with the demands of nature will also be considered part of Islam.

This sort of reasoning is utterly baseless. Equally baseless is any movement that is launched based on this reasoning. □



Tree

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 on what it turns out to be.

LESSONS FROM NATURE

For Conflict Avoidance

SOME animals roam about in search of fodder; others in search of their mates. Some busily run around building their houses. Some hunt for food for their babies. While engaged in these and other such tasks, they may suddenly confront an enemy. If they enter into a fight with them, the work that they had set out to do would be completely disrupted. That is why all animals abstain from direct confrontation with their enemies, unless they find themselves in a situation where they feel absolutely compelled to do so. In order to continue their own constructive work, they simply avoid conflict and move ahead.



The diverse methods of protection that nature has schooled animals in hold important lessons for humans. Animals use this approach to deal with opponents on the basis of instinct. Humans must use the very same approach, but based on conscious choice and awareness.

Animals face two big challenges; finding food, and defending themselves. Animals have enemies in the animal world, and so every animal has to arrange for its protection. The diverse methods that animals use to protect themselves hold great significance for human beings, because these methods are natural methods, bestowed by God. Nature directly teaches these methods to animals. It is as if animals are students who have received this training in the school of nature. Their ways of acting and reacting are lessons that nature has schooled them in. These methods testify to the Creator who made them.

Animal defensive behavior is a complete subject of study in itself. This behaviour of animals is used in the act of self-preservation, to avoid falling victim to another animal

or predator. The function of this behavior is harm avoidance, and may manifest in several ways, for example: bat hawks and bat falcons protect themselves by staying out of sight.

The flat-tailed horned lizard is a good example of using camouflage to the extent that it even eliminates its shadow and blends in with the surroundings. Moths, butterflies etc. startle the predator and make use of the opportunity to escape. Pursuit deterrent signals is a strategy used

by white tailed deer and a few other mammals which is like informing that both prey and the predator should save time and energy by giving up the chase. Playing dead, mimicry, distraction, using their defensive structures etc., are a few other methods where animals instinctively avoid confronting the enemies.

The goal of all the above being the same—to avoid fighting which will result in destruction.

These diverse methods of protection that nature has schooled animals in hold important lessons for humans. Animals use this approach to deal with opponents on the basis of instinct. Humans must use the very same approach, but based on conscious choice and awareness.

For man, too, the best policy to adopt vis-à-vis their opponents is to save themselves from directly clashing with them, and instead, to try to move ahead. Your opponent should not get the opportunity to feel that you are interfering in his domain. If you happen to confront your opponent, you should appear to be inactive, saving yourself from his aggression. Or, you should keep yourself carefully confined to your own domain, and in this way, convince your opponent that you will not cause him any harm. Along with this, you should also adopt measures that will enable you to foil your opponent's aggressive plans in a possible emergency situation.

The behaviour of animals teaches us humans that we too, should avoid unnecessary confrontation with others, and instead, should focus on our own growth.

Animals did not invent these above-cited methods of protection by themselves. It was God who taught them, so these methods have divine sanction. They are not a form or expression of cowardice. Rather, they indicate a necessary pragmatism. They teach us humans that we too, should avoid unnecessary confrontation with others, and instead, should focus on our own growth. □



Recognition

Recognition always comes after rejection.

TEMPTATION AND ANGER

Enemies of Man

ADAM was the first man in human history. The scriptures tell us that after the creation of Adam and his wife Eve, they were settled in the garden of Paradise. The whole garden was theirs to live as they pleased. The only restriction was that they were instructed not to approach "the forbidden tree" otherwise they would lose Paradise.

Adam and Eve were always inquisitive about that forbidden tree. Finally, they succumbed to temptation. They crossed the limit set on them and approached the forbidden tree and tasted its fruit. Suddenly their sojourn in Paradise came to an end and they were ordered to leave the garden of Paradise.

This was the first sign that human beings were vulnerable to temptation. It was a warning to all mankind that they must be on their guard against temptation otherwise they will lose the blessing of the Creator. If they live a life within proper limits, the garden of Paradise is for them,

otherwise not. The garden of Paradise is for them but not as a right. It has to be merited. If according to one's deeds, one is deserving candidate for Paradise, they will be selected for Paradise. The first entry of Adam and Eve into Paradise was unconditional, but on the Day of Judgement, Paradise will be given to people on selective basis. And selection will be made on the basis of merit, and not simply as a matter of birth right.

The two great enemies of man in this world are temptation and anger. Temptation comes from within, while anger is the result of external experiences. The principle for success in regard to both is control.

Scriptures tell us another relevant story. Cain and Abel were the sons of Adam and Eve. There was some disagreement between the two and Cain became so angry that he could not forgive his brother. In this rage, he killed his younger brother. This was the first murder

in human history. It is a reminder for mankind that everyone must control their anger. If they fail in the test of anger control, they will go astray and commit blunders and consequently, will lose Paradise forever.

As recorded in the scriptures, this is an eye opener in human history. It gives a great lesson to all human beings. They must be much cautious

regarding these great weaknesses: temptation and anger. If they are cautious and avoid succumbing to these two weaknesses, they will have eternal success, otherwise they will never gain entry into Paradise.

The two great enemies of man in this world are temptation and anger. Temptation comes from within, while the anger is the result of external experiences. The principle for success in regard to both is control—that is, everyone must learn the art of self-management. They must resist temptation and suppress anger. Those who develop their minds sufficiently to save themselves from these two evils will achieve eternal success. □



Sincerity

Sincerity is not a single value. Sincerity combines all the good human values, where there is sincerity, there are all kinds of moral beauties. In contrast, insincerity is bound to wash away all kinds of moral beauties from one's personality.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness puts an end to the problem once and for all, while a tit-for-tat policy only aggravates and prolongs the problem. The supposition that forgiveness encourages further wrongdoing is flimsy and runs counter to the law of nature.

INTELLECTUAL MOULD

Choose Carefully

EVERY person develops a certain mindset or intellectual mould, which is shaped according to the conditions that one faces. People think according to this mould, and form their opinions according to it. No matter what the reality of things may actually be, our ideas about them are those that accord with our particular intellectual mould.

This fact about human beings is expressed in the Quran in the following words:

Say to them, 'Everyone acts in his own way, and your Lord knows best who is rightly guided.' (17: 84)

It is the process of introspection that saves us from developing a wrong mindset and spending our whole lives being controlled by it.

That is to say, one forms an opinion about something according to one's own mindset, irrespective of the true nature of that thing.

We human beings are social beings. We are born into this world within a particular social milieu. In this milieu, every day numerous happenings keep occurring. Whether we like it or not, we keep imbibing influences from our environment. In this way, our minds become conditioned. And, gradually, this conditioning becomes so strong that we begin to think that what we are conditioned to believe is true.

In this situation, what each one of us needs to do is to constantly introspect. We must keep trying to find out what is natural and what things our minds have accepted as a result of conditioning by our environment.

It is this intellectual effort that is called 'introspection'. It is the process of introspection that saves us from developing a wrong mindset and spending our whole lives being controlled by it. In this regard, then, we have to become our own inspector and must constantly inspect ourselves. □



THOUGHT CRIME

Abominable Accusation

IMAM IBN TAIMIYAH AL-HARRANI (661-728 CE) was born in Syria. Among Muslims, he generally occupies the position of a very important religious scholar. He has been given the title of *Shaikh-e Akbar* or 'The Great Shaikh', and his books are given the status of authoritative reference works. In the famous Arabic digital library *al-Maktaba ash-Shamila*, there are 154 books by him.

An article by an Arab scholar Muhammad Habash is available on the Internet. It is titled: *'Ibn Taimiyah and 428 fatwas under the title: [A person will be asked to] seek repentance or otherwise will be killed'*. The author has made an in-depth study of Ibn Taimiyah's books. In his article, he shows which actions Ibn Taimiyah has, according to his own way of thinking, declared to be crimes that supposedly merit the death penalty. Muhammad Habash cites Ibn Taimiyah's words in this way: *"Such people would be asked to repent, but if they do not repent, they shall be killed"*. According to Muhammad Habash, this phrase of Ibn Taimiyah's appears 200 times in his collection of *fatwas* or legal opinions, and if other books by Ibn Taimiyah are also included, the number of such "crimes" would amount to 428.

Now, which are these "crimes" that Ibn Taimiyah refers to. All of them are what could be called "thought crimes".

Muhammad Habash cites some examples from *fatwas* by Ibn Taimiyah which are given below:

Ibn Taimiyah says, that if a person does not say that God is on His throne above the skies, he will be told to repent, and if he does not do so, he shall be killed.

In Islam, thought crimes are actions that do not deserve punishment at all.

If a person says to someone else that he relied on him or that he trusts him, he will be told to repent, and if does not repent he shall be killed.

If a mature person does not perform one of the five obligatory prayers or abandons one of the agreed-upon religious obligations, he will be told to repent, and if he does not, he shall be killed.

A person who does not say that God is above the seven heavens will, on account of this, be declared a non-believer and shedding his blood will be lawful. He will be told to repent, and if he does not, he will be executed.

A person who says that the Quran is created will be told to repent. If he does not, he will be beheaded.

A person who does not adhere to the Shariah will be told to repent, and if he does not, he shall be killed.

A person who claims that he has a way to reach God other than the Shariah given by the Prophet Muhammad, through which he can obtain God's good pleasure, will be told to repent, and if he does not, his head will be chopped off.

According to Muslim consensus, to eat a snake or scorpion is forbidden. But, Ibn Taimiyah argues, if someone considers it permissible to eat these, he will be told to repent. If he does not, he shall be killed.

According to the Quran and Hadith, there is punishment for social crimes, but for one who expresses his difference through words, Muslims' response should be in the form of exhortation and counselling, and not punishment.

If someone says that God did not speak to Moses, he will be told to repent. If he does not, he shall be killed.

The phrase 'Allahu Akbar' (God is Great) is not written in the Quran and all Muslims accept this fact. If a person thinks that 'Allahu Akbar' is written in the Quran, Ibn Taimiyah opines, he will be asked to repent, and if he does not, he shall be killed.

If someone delays the obligatory prayer to engage in hunting or to serve his teacher, so much that the sun sets, he must be punished. According to the majority of the ulema, Ibn Taimiyah argues, if the person does not repent it is compulsory that he be killed.

The *fatwas* of Ibn Taimiyah unfortunately were not looked at critically by the later generation of the scholars (*ulema*). On account of this, even after the passage of 700-odd years, no scholar worth mentioning has written a book against this. Instead, despite the sort of claims that Ibn Taimiyah makes, he continues to occupy a very big position among the leaders of the *ulema*.

With regard to the issues for which Ibn Taimiyah has given *fatwas* calling for the death penalty, it is instructive to note that not a single of these "crimes" is mentioned in the Quran or *Hadith*. Yet, despite this, why did Ibn Taimiyah and other *ulema* call for punishment for actions that are not mentioned as crimes in the Quran and *Hadith*? The reason for this is that these *ulema* did not distinguish between a "social crime"

and a “thought crime”. In accordance with the teachings of Islam, stiff punishments have been laid down for social crimes. But in Islam, thought crimes are actions that do not deserve punishment at all.

Thought crimes are, in essence, a misuse of the freedom that God has blessed human beings with. If such misuse of freedom by a person is not physically harmful to someone, then the person will not be held punishable for his thoughts or beliefs. As is mentioned in the Quran: “This is the truth from your Lord. Let him who will, believe in it, and him who will, deny it.” (18: 29)

The fact of the matter is that in the later period of Islam, the notion of *dawah*, of calling people to God, disappeared. Muslims began thinking that a person who does something wrong—whether in word or deed—must be given stern punishment. But this concept is completely alien to the Quran and *Hadith*. According to the Quran and *Hadith*, there is punishment for social crimes, but for one who expresses his difference through words, Muslims’ response should be in the form of exhortation and counselling, and not punishment.

The notion of stern punishment emerged in the later period of Islam, when Muslims had established their political empires. In the initial period of Islam, the response to such a situation was different—it was a peaceful, *dawah*-based response. But in the later period of Islam, Muslims came to think that because they now exercised political power, they had to reply to such a situation with force. This concept was against the Quran. The Quran is completely based on the concept of peaceful *dawah*, not on the principle of violent punishment. In this matter, this verse of the Quran enjoys the status of a guiding principle: “So, [O Prophet] exhort them: your task is only to exhort, you are not their warden.” (88: 21-22)

This verse of the Quran employs the word *musaytir*, which means a warden, that it is to say someone who forcibly enforces something. In this Quranic verse it is ordained, in absolute terms, that the Prophet’s and believers’ responsibility is only to share wisdom with people in a peaceful manner. Thus, the responsibility is not to enforce their ideas or beliefs on others through coercion. They should not imagine that they are wardens over people. The above Quranic verse makes it eternally binding that in matters of thought they have absolutely no right to use force against others. Their responsibility is only to exhort people in a spirit of genuine well-wishing. The result is totally the domain of God. □



INTERACTION

Important for Development

THERE is a *Hadith* that appears in various books. In the words of one narration, the Prophet is said to have remarked: "A believer who engages with people and is patient when he faces annoyance from them shall have greater reward than him who neither interacts with others nor remains patient over the troubles caused by them." (*Musnad Ahmad*)

This *Hadith* stresses the importance of social interaction. A *Hadith* commentator comments on this report in these words: "A life of social interaction is better than a life of solitude." (*Tuhfat al-Ahwazi*). The superiority of a life of interaction is not just in an ethical sense. More than this is the importance of such a life in terms of personality development.

One can avail of the benefits of a life of interaction only if one has the necessary seriousness about life. One should be willing to think deeply about things and to learn from others. Then every interaction becomes a means for intellectual development. When one interacts with others, one faces different sorts of experiences. One learns new things from them. Interaction with others provides a person the opportunity to reform his own thinking. One gains the chance to expand one's knowledge. These benefits of social interaction can be had only by someone who has the spirit of learning, someone who is able to see things in an unprejudiced and objective way. Such a person willingly acknowledges others. He gauges views and opinions on the basis of truth, not on the basis of whose views and opinions they are. He is what can be called a 'complex-free soul'. □

The benefits of social interaction can be had only by someone who has the spirit of learning, someone who is able to see things in an unprejudiced and objective way.



Sound Thinking

Anyone who wants to inculcate sound thinking must avoid suspicion at all costs.

DEATH

Compulsory Break

ONE of the rules of government service is that if a government servant goes on leave without first having obtained official approval, the government has the right to consider his absence a break in service. This means that his seniority will be affected; he will lose all rights to the benefits of service, and will return to the status which he had on day one of his appointment. He will, therefore, forfeit all the rights of promotion due to him for all his past years of service. A break in service will thus mean a demotion for him.

This principle, in the context of the history of mankind, applies to all human beings, only on a larger scale, and may be termed a break in history. In this world, everyone stands on the history he has carved out for himself. He is born, he gradually grows up, then different opportunities present themselves to him, by availing of which he makes a history of his own and acquires for himself various kinds of supports—a home, property, a family, circle of friends, popularity, power, wealth, treasures, etc. His history becomes his identity. He knows himself through it. This happens with every person. Everyone constructs his own history—a never-ending struggle—and it in turn is a bastion of strength for him.

Death comes to everyone, as an irrevocable part of human fate, and it mostly comes without warning. Man is then disconnected from the stage of life before death and is taken on to the stage of life after death.

But few have the opportunity to live on for a lengthy period of time. Inevitably, within a period of approximately a hundred years, the moment called death comes suddenly. Death comes to everyone, as an irrevocable part of human fate, and it mostly comes without warning. Man is then disconnected from the stage of life before death and is taken on to

the stage of life after death. It is like having the entire history of one's deeds suddenly nullified, and returning to a state without a history. The advent of death, an event which takes place in the life of every person, may thus be called a break in history. Everyone devotes their energies to constructing a world which will satisfy their hopes and desires. Every person lives in a world of his own making. Then, all of a sudden, death comes and compels them to leave this world and enter a world for which they have made no preparation. One leaves behind

the world so painstakingly built by them, only to find that the world which lies ahead for them is a never-ending desert for which they were not prepared. One who has lived all along in security and comfort is suddenly confronted with having to live in a state of total deprivation.

The stage of life before death is not just the first but is also the final chance for all human beings to bow to God's will. They are not going—at any later stage—to have a second chance. One who made use of this chance only to provide himself with worldly comforts and luxuries will be compelled to live in the stage of life after death divested of all former material supports. For death will separate him from his past history and he will never have another chance to make a new history.

How strange it is that man is losing the only chance he has today of developing those virtues most desired for him by God and how devastating it will be when, tomorrow, man will be in a total state of deprivation, and it will not be possible for him to save himself from it. □



Voice of the Conscience

Going against one's conscience is not very easy. It is this behaviour that creates what is called tension or stress. If you want to live with a tension free mind, listen to the voice of your conscience and follow it without any reservation.



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

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

Tell My servants, those who are true believers, to keep up prayer and to give alms secretly and openly out of what We have given them, before the Day comes when there will be neither trading nor befriending.

(14: 31)

When a man confronts troubles, he tries his utmost to save himself from them; if he has friends, he uses their strength; if he has wealth, he spends it in that connection. A man's anxiety to save himself compels him to rush towards both these solutions.

Prayer (*salat*) and spending (*infaq*) are, in fact, the worldly manifestations of man's feelings about the problem of the Hereafter. Prayer (*salat*) is running towards God's protection so that one may thereby save himself from God's wrath in the Hereafter. In the same way, openly and secretly spending in this world is like donating one's earnings for the cause of God, so that it may become the means of obtaining relief from the rigours of the Hereafter. In the Hereafter, one may wish to spend, but one will have nothing with which one could ransom oneself from the suffering there.

It was God who created the heavens and the earth. He sends down water from the sky with which He brings forth fruits for your sustenance; He has made ships subservient to you, so that they may sail across the sea by His command; and has subjected the rivers to you.

He has also subjected to you the sun and the moon, both steadfastly pursuing their courses. He has subjected to you the night as well as the day; He has given you all that you asked of Him; and if you try to reckon up God's favours, you will not be able to count them. Truly man is very unjust, very ungrateful. (14: 32-34)

To the most wonderful extent, the present world bears testimony to God's existence. The rotation of stars and planets in the vastness of space; the provision and sustenance for life on the earth, the abundance of water; man's ability to run his vehicles on land, sail on water and fly in space; the earth's being favourable to man with the help of rivers and mountains; the regularity of the seasons and the occurrence of day and night with the help of the sun and the moon—all these are phenomena too great to be adequately expressed in words. There is such perfect co-ordination between man and the universe that every imaginable, or unimaginable necessity of man has already been provided for here in abundance.

All these things are so wonderful that they should shake a man and should overwhelm him with feelings of submission to God. In spite of this, why, on seeing the universe, is he not filled with wonder and why does he not tremble at the concept of the Creator of the universe? The reason for this is that man sees the universe as soon as he is born. By seeing it again and again he takes it to be an ordinary thing; he does not find any uniqueness in it, and takes it for granted.

Moreover, when a man receives anything in this world, it appears to be available to him through the 'cause-and-effect' process. On this basis, he thinks that whatever he attains is due to his own diligence and talents. That is why the feeling of gratitude to God, the Giver, does not develop in him. □



Money

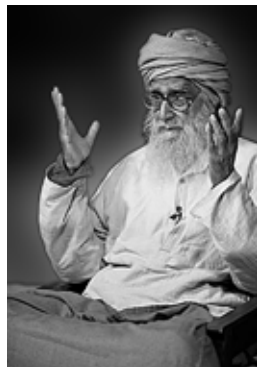
If you make money your sole concern in life, you are underutilizing yourself. Money of course is a necessity, but its acquisition should not be your sole purpose in life.

ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

I do not believe that one religion, conventionally understood, is the only and complete truth to which others must be 'invited'. Kindly comment on this.

According to Islam, God is one and also religion is one. According to the Quran, God Almighty sent His prophets to every nation and community. There was no difference between religions brought by different prophets. In terms of the past, this is the position of different religions. Muslims have been guided to believe in every prophet and the books they brought.



The Quran further guides us to the understanding that the teachings of other prophets and the books they brought were not historically preserved. While the Quran claims that it is a historically preserved book.

Being born seekers every person seeks the true faith. In this path of seeking he realizes that there are many different paths. This state of affairs compels the seeker to compare and then take a final decision.

Islam lays down the principle that the basis for such a decision should be history. It considers the historical criterion as the rational criterion in this regard. As no prophet is alive today in the world, one can only make history the deciding factor for which path to follow.

To illustrate this matter, I will give an example. Dr. Nishikanta Chattopadhyay (1852-1910) was a Bengali scholar, born in Bengal and settled in Hyderabad towards the end of his life. He was a learned man who knew several languages. He studied many religions by applying the above historical criterion. He found that although many prophets came to the world, history tells that the books they brought have not been preserved. Dr. Chattopadhyay realized that there was only one exception in this matter and that was of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad ibn Abdullah, who was born in 570 CE in Makkah and died in 632 CE in Madinah. Dr. Chattopadhyay discovered that Prophet Muhammad was the only historical prophet and the book that he brought is preserved to date without any changes. He has written about this in his book, *Why I Embraced Islam?* He remarked when he

studied the life of the Prophet Muhammad: 'What a relief to find after all a truly historical prophet to believe in!'

In the light of the above guidance from the Quran and the example of a seeker, it is a matter of conviction to the person who wishes to follow a chosen path.

As far as 'inviting' others is concerned, it is a natural desire of every person to present before others what one believes in. This is true not only in religion but in other secular concepts also. The only important thing to understand, is that one should invite people with beauty and wisdom and not try to enforce anything. According to the Quran, one is only asked to convey the message, and gives man total freedom to choose his action. A related verse says, there is no compulsion in religion.

The second important fact is to present the message with humility and not with a superiority complex. This is what can be called an intellectual exchange. Parting from such discussions will leave one enriched with different perspectives and a better understanding of points put forth by those engaged. □



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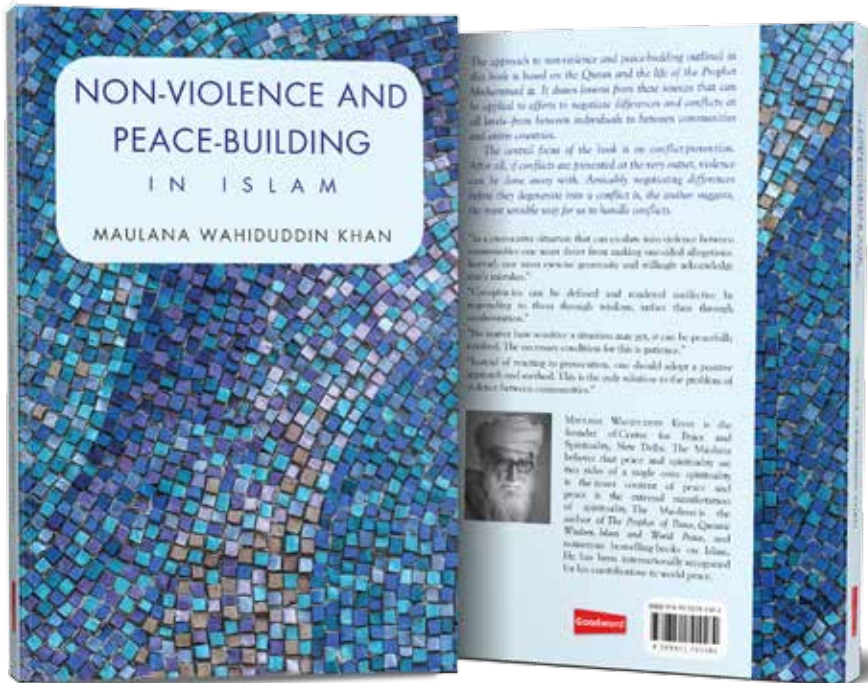
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