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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

THE HEREAFTER
Life After Death

Examples From His Life
PROPHETIC WISDOM

ISLAM AND HUMAN RIGHTS
A Function of Divine Rights

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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Spiritual Living

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

ISSUE 6, JUNE 2013

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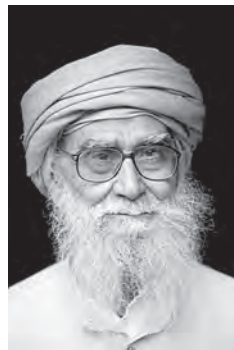
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK

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 third highest civilian honour in India, and the Demiurgus Peace International Award. He has been called 'Islam's spiritual ambassador to the world' and is recognised as one of its most influential Muslims'. 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.



THE AGE OF NEO-GANDHISM

INDIA'S freedom struggle started in 1857. But it failed to achieve its goal. Many years later Mahatma Gandhi emerged on India's political scene. He took charge of India's freedom struggle in 1920. And within less than thirty years, India had won its freedom.

Before 1947, the goal was 'Quit India'. Then, after 1947, our leaders adopted a new slogan: 'Build India'. Although the wording of these slogans was different, the sense was one and the same. Now more than sixty years have elapsed, and that goal is still a distant dream. India is still waiting for that future envisioned by the freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for a better India, who wanted—to quote Mahatma Gandhi—'to wipe away tears from every eye'.

Almost all the leaders of post-independence India claim that they are following the Gandhian path. Now the question is, why Gandhism, which was successful in pre-independence India, seems to be a failure in post-independence India?

The answer is that we need Neo-Gandhism rather than the old pattern of Gandhism. Ousting the British from our country was the goal during pre-Independence era. Now there is no such situation prevailing: the target is our own nation rather than any foreign power.

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

Gandhism was based on peaceful struggle. At that time Gandhi opted for mass mobilization, a technique he used against British power. For this purpose he adopted such methods as hunger strikes, street demonstrations, non-co-operation, civil disobedience, etc. This method was a kind of mob activism. Our present leaders have also adopted the same tactics. But the fact is that this kind of method has lost its relevance in modern India. A commentator has rightly said that protest activism generates more heat than light.

I am a Gandhian, I believe that Gandhism is relevant in modern India also, but not on the old pattern. Now we have to apply Gandhism to the new situation. This new application of Gandhism may be called Neo-Gandhism.

Neo is a prefix, meaning an old idea in modern form. There are several examples where scholars have used this prefix, that is, accepting the old with some modifications, for example, Neo-Marxism, Neo-Platonism, Neo-Darwinism, etc. Neo-Gandhism is the best word for reviving Gandhism in the present Indian situation.

While the old pattern of the Gandhian method was based on mass mobilization, Neo-Gandhism will be based on the re-engineering of people's minds. In the present situation, simply protesting will not work. We need to evolve a new way of thinking. We have to try to establish a duty-conscious society rather than a rights conscious society.

Since 1950 I have been successfully carrying out this very task. Here I would like to give two examples; first, of the Muslim community of India and second, of the people of Kashmir.

It is a well-known fact that after Independence there was great conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Every day there were riots between these two communities. Then through my mission, the Muslim mindset changed. I gave them the message that mere reaction would not work, you have to see things in a positive manner. Now, it is common knowledge that communal riots in India have been minimized to a considerable degree. This change is a direct result of our peace mission. I have published many books aimed at this. Two examples are '*Hindustani Musalman*' (Urdu), and '*Indian Muslims: The Need for a Positive Outlook*' (English).

The other target of our mission was the Kashmiri people. We wanted to change the mindset of the Kashmiri people, who were trying to change the political status quo in Kashmir through militancy. However, we constantly made them believe that this was an impossible game. We have to accept the reality. One example of this method is set forth in our book, which has been published in '*Subh-e-Kashmir*' (Urdu), and in '*Dawn Over Kashmir*' (English). Now, it is a well-established fact that the Kashmiris have almost abandoned their previous way of thinking and, by and large, there is peace in Kashmir. This change is a direct result of our mission. If any violent incident occurs in Kashmir, it is due to foreign elements.

This mission that I call Neo-Gandhism is applicable to all the people of India. Its method is based on education and not on militancy. In pre-independence India, the course resorted to was mob activism. This should now be replaced by educational activism. This method seems to be a long-term method. Such a goal can be achieved only through long-term planning. Short-term planning will be of no avail.

Neo-Gandhism is not a departure from the Gandhian ideology. In fact, it is reapplying the Gandhian ideology in a changing world. This kind of reapplication is common to the history of all systems and ideologies.

In the pre-independence era, there were two parties: the Indian nation and the British occupiers. This was a 'we-they' equation; so the basic target of Gandhism was to oust the British from the Indian soil, which happened successfully on August 15, 1947.

Now the situation is completely different. Now, there is no 'they'; all are members of the Indian nation. The present situation is based on a 'we-we' equation, and not a 'we-they' equation as it was in the past.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan
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EXPERIENCING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

ONE of the three astronauts who travelled in the Apollo-15 American spacecraft was Colonel James Irwin. He later described the magic of that moment in August 1972, when he set foot on the moon. It was an ecstatic experience he said, to feel oneself in God's presence, to feel so close to Him that His greatness appeared before one's eyes. Colonel Irwin did not look on his voyage to the moon as a voyage of mere scientific discovery; it had given him new spiritual life as well.

If we were to look with awe at this world, we would live on earth as if we were in God's presence.

Colonel Irwin's experience was not a unique one. For, in truth, all that God has created is so wonderful that one has only to gaze upon it to become lost in the wonders of what He has fashioned. The face of the Creator shines continually in the perfection of His creation.

But, by observing the world around us from an early age, we become accustomed to it; we take it so much for granted that we fail to perceive its uniqueness. Wind and water, trees and birds—all the wonders of nature are a mirror of perfection, reflections of the Lord. But we are too familiar with them to realize how extraordinary they are. Only in unfamiliar circumstances, such as when a man sets foot on the moon, does one wake up to the wonders of the world; only then does the sighting the spectacles of creation arouse in one an awareness of the presence of the Creator.

But we too can experience God's presence, as Colonel Irwin did, just by observing the world around us. The trouble is that people do not look on the world with true wonderment, in the way someone on the moon for the first time is awestruck by the spectacle that meets his eyes. If we were to look with the same awe at this world, we would live on earth as if we were in God's presence; we would continually see Him, feel Him—all around us—and act as if we knew that He was before our very eyes.

When we behold a magnificent machine for the first time, we immediately become aware of the skill of its manufacturer. In the same

way, if we observe the world, and ponder over the wonders it contains, then the Creator Himself will appear before us; we will gaze on creation and see in it the face of the Lord.

The moon was a new sight for Colonel Irwin. That is why, struck by its magnificence, he was able to experience the presence of God on it. In order to see God in His creation, we too have to look at everything—not as old and familiar—but as new and exciting; we have to look at things as if we are seeing them for the first time.

There is no greater discovery than the discovery of God, no greater realization than to feel Him everywhere. When this realization is achieved, then everything becomes a reflection of His glory. The sunshine will portray His light, the trees, His beauty. One will feel His gentle touch in the winds as they caress one's body. As one prostrates oneself before Him, it will be as though one has cast oneself at His feet. God is, indeed, everywhere, but only those who are blessed with vision can behold Him.

Earth-rise from the Lunar landscape



ISLAM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

by Dr. Farida Khanam

O people! Behold, we have created you from a male and a female; and we have made you into tribes and sub-tribes, so that you may recognize one another. The most honourable among you, in the sight of God, is he who is the most righteous among you. God is All-Knowing, All-Aware.

THE QURAN, 49: 13

RIGHTS in Islam are divided into two categories. One concerns divine rights (*Huququallah*) and the other, human rights (*Huququ'lbad*). Though divine rights are superior to human rights, this difference is only a matter of belief or doctrine.

In theory, divine rights and human rights are different; but in a practical sense, both the rights: divine and human, are so interrelated that sometimes it becomes impossible to separate one from the other.

In fact, it is the observance of divine rights that paves the way for observance of human rights in the true sense of the word. For instance, the first and foremost divine right is *Tawheed*, that is, to declare the oneness of God, without associating anything with Him. As the Quran says:

Say, "He is God, the One.
He is self-sufficient
He begets not, nor was He begotten."

THE QURAN, 112: 1-3

This belief of *Tawheed* helps man realize the fact that there is nothing superior to, or greater than God. All creatures, including human beings, irrespective of their external differences, are equal in dignity as well as in responsibility before the one and only God. Anyone who abuses or humiliates or ridicules others, abuses the Creator indirectly. Such commandments abound in the Quran and *Hadith* and show that divine rights and human rights are so interdependent that they become complementary to one another.

It is as if God will not accept our obeisance to Him if we do not fulfil the human rights prescribed in the Quran and *Hadith*.

For instance, the Prophet is reported to have said:

"By God, he is not a believer, by God, he is not a believer,
by God, he is not a believer."

When asked by the companions, "Who is he?", the Prophet replied,
"He whose neighbour is not safe from his mischievous deeds."

Hadith-Abu Dawud

The differences between human beings seen as justification for discrimination resulting in the violation of basic human rights are considered in the Quran as signs of God:

And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth,
and the diversity of your tongues and colours. In that surely are signs
for those who possess knowledge.

THE QURAN, 30: 22

All the differences of race, community or tribe (THE QURAN 49: 13) are just for mutual introduction (*Ta'aruf*) and not for discrimination. The differences of race, community or tribe are not meant for discrimination against one another. They exist rather, for the purpose of knowing and appreciating one another.

Differences lead to intellectual exchange and intellectual development.

It is astonishing to note that the Quran had declared fifteen hundred years ago the biological unity of human beings, a fact which was scientifically established only during the 20th century.

The fourth chapter of the Quran begins with this proclamation:

O mankind, be conscious of your Sustainer, who has created you out
of a single living soul and out of it created its mate. And out of the
two spread on the earth a multitude of men and women.

THE QURAN, 4: 1

Human life in Islam is held in such high esteem that the killing of a single human being is considered equivalent to the assassination of the whole of mankind. And the protection of a single human life is equivalent to protection of the whole of mankind. It is so stated in

the Quran with reference to the murder of Abel by his elder brother Cain, this being the first violation of human rights in human history. (THE QURAN 5: 27-32)

Some scholars claim that Islam does not have any provision for human rights in the modern sense, since it is theocentric, and therefore God is regarded as the starting point of all thought and action. On the contrary, the modern concept of human rights is anthropocentric, wherein man forms the centre of everything. However, a thorough analysis shows that this view is based on a misconception. Man's primary duty in Islam consists of obeying God wholeheartedly and unconditionally. All other rights, including human rights, automatically stem from this primary duty towards God.

**It is the observance of divine rights that paves the way
for the observance of human rights.**

We can say that, without this theocentric perspective, neither can the fulfilment of human rights be ensured nor their violation avoided. The preamble of the UN Charter of Human Rights (UDHR) calls on all member nations to strive to construct a new world order, on a sounder basis, 'one in which the recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal inalienable rights of all the members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world'.¹

It would be difficult to say that the UN or any other national or international body or authority has actually established the required world order on a sound basis. But in Islam as stated earlier, the doctrine of *Tawheed* and unconditional obedience to God provide the most powerful incentive for the observance of human rights and the strongest deterrence as such against their violation.

Some Comparative Examples

Muslim scholars have thoroughly studied the topic of human rights. For details the readers may refer to the following books:

Human Rights in Islam by Muhammad Zafarullah Khan
Islam and Human Rights by A.E. Mayer
Human Rights in Islam by Dr. Parveen Shaukat

1. For the full text of UDHR see: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

However, it would be better to present some references from the Quran, *Hadith* and Islamic history. This may show us a clearer picture of human rights in the Islamic *Shariah*, both in theory and in practice.

Freedom of religion:

Religious freedom is the basic human right whose violation has caused conflicts, wars and bloodshed in both ancient and modern societies. The Quran therefore has declared for the first time in human history, that 'there shall be no coercion in matters of religion.' (THE QURAN 2: 256).

In view of this prohibition of coercion, all Islamic jurists without any exception hold that forcible conversion is under all circumstances null and void. Any attempt to coerce a non-believer to accept Islam is a grievous sin. According to this principle of 'non-coercion', it is not permissible to exploit or manipulate personal weaknesses or calamities (e.g. poverty, sickness, famine, etc.) for religious conversion. That is why old and downtrodden non-Muslims were exempted from taxes and given all monetary support by the Islamic state without ever being asked to embrace Islam just for the advantages it would give them.

Protection of a single human life is equivalent to protection of the whole of mankind.

Once, a Jewish widow came to the Caliph Umar asking for some financial aid. Umar tried to persuade her to accept Islam. He promised to take care of all her needs if she embraced Islam. But the lady refused. Umar then gave her more than she had asked for. When she departed, Umar raised his hands towards heaven and said:

O God, bear witness that I have not exercised any coercion on this lady.

Tarikh Umar ibn Khattab, Ibn al-Jawzi

Justice and equality before the Law:

According to the Quran and *Hadith*, the establishment of justice is one of the most essential goals in the sending of the prophets and in revealing the divine scriptures. (THE QURAN, 57: 25)

The just are loved by God, (THE QURAN, 60: 8); while the unjust will face the fire of Hell. (THE QURAN, 72: 15)

The Prophet once observed:

God does not bless a community in which the weak cannot take from the strong what is rightfully theirs without fear of reprisal.

Hadith-Sunan, Ibn Majah

Deviation from the path of justice is not allowed, even when it concerns one's opponent or enemy (THE QURAN 5: 8). The ruler and the ruled, the rich and the poor, black and white, should be treated equally before law, without any discrimination or distinction of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political affiliation, birth or other status. The following incident illustrates how strictly this ideal was religiously maintained in the early phase of Islam in accordance with Islamic doctrines and commandments.

Any attempt to coerce a non-believer to accept Islam is a grievous sin.

A woman by the name of Fatimah, belonging to the *Banu Makhzum* tribe, once committed a theft. Her kinsfolk, fearing that she would be punished, sent *Usamah ibn Zayd* to intercede with the Prophet on her behalf. When the Prophet heard this pre-planned intercession, signs of anger appeared on his face.

“Are you trying to sway me as to the limits laid down by God?” he asked. *Usamah ibn Zayd* immediately admitted his mistake and begged the Prophet to pray on his behalf for forgiveness. The Prophet then delivered a sermon to those assembled there saying:

Communities of old came to grief and destruction because of the disparity and leniency shown to those in high positions when they committed such an offence. On the contrary, any offender of humble origin or lowly status in society had harsh punishment meted out to him. By God, if my own daughter Fatimah were to steal, I would have her punished.

Hadith-Al-Bukhari, Muslim

Freedom of expression and dissent:

The principle of non-coercion mentioned above has not been confined to religious freedom alone. Rather, it has been extensively elaborated

upon and widely applied to all social, cultural, and political spheres of society. This has led to the development of a new culture in which individuals enjoy freedom of expression, dissent and criticism without any fear or restriction. The following examples may suffice to explain to what extent this essential human right was observed in earlier Muslim societies.

Once the Caliph Umar came to a well of the *Banu Harithah* where he met an outspoken person named *Muhammad ibn Maslama*. "How do you find me?" he asked *Muhammad*, "By God, I find you just as I would like you to be and just as it would please any well-wisher to see you. You are good at accumulating money, I see, but you keep your hands clean of it yourself, distributing it equitably to others." "But," went on *Muhammad ibn Maslama*, "If you adopt a crooked course, we will straighten you, just as we straighten swords by placing them in a vice." At these aggressively critical words, Umar, the second Muslim Caliph, exclaimed:

Praise be to God, who has put me among a people who will straighten me if I become crooked.

Kanz al-Ummal

When Muslims at Medina, with their increasing affluence, began to settle huge dowers on their daughters, Umar, in his capacity as Caliph, ordered that no one should demand or pay a dower that exceeded four hundred dirhams, and that anything in excess of this amount would be confiscated and deposited in the public treasury.

After the proclamation of this ordinance, when he came down from the pulpit, a tall, flat-nosed old woman stood up and confidently said:

The Quran has set no restrictions on this matter: Umar has no right to set an upper limit to the dowers.

She backed up her contention by reciting a relevant verse from the Quran. Umar's immediate reaction on hearing this was to say:

May God, forgive me, everyone knows better than Umar, even this old lady.

Tirmidhi, Ahmad

With the advent of Islam in the seventh century, however, it was

declared for the benefit of mankind that all greatness was the exclusive prerogative of God, and that in the eyes of God, all human beings were equal. The Prophet Muhammad declared not once, but on many occasions that all were alike, all were brothers.

The Prophet not only stated the truth but also made it a reality by bringing about a total revolution based on the idea of human equality. On achieving political domination in Arabia, he was able to put this theory into practice in his capacity as ruler of a state. In this way, Islam put an end to discrimination between human beings on the basis of race, colour, status, etc. People were assigned a high or low status according to their moral worth.



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TRUST IS GOLDEN

WITH just a few hundred rupees capital, a man from Delhi started a business. He used to buy scraps of cloth which he would sell from door to door. When his business had grown somewhat, he obtained permission to sit on the pavement in front of a shop and sell his merchandise there.

This freelance cloth-merchant built up a good deal of trust with his wholesaler, whom he impressed with his honesty and fair dealing. The wholesaler began to grant cloth on loan to the vendor, who always made an effort to settle his debt before the appointed date. This habit made him even more trustworthy in the eyes of the wholesaler, who granted him more and more cloth on loan. After just a few years, the wholesaler was giving this street-vendor ₹150,000 worth of cloth on loan, an amount which he would not have given anybody else except on the basis of a considerable cash-down payment.

**Trust is an invaluable asset
which can buy much more than money can.**

Clearly, such a large amount of cloth could not be accommodated on the street. The cloth-vendor now required a shop. He bought one, and his business continued to grow, and before long he was among the leading cloth-merchants of the old city.

It is a mistake to think of money as the greatest asset in life. The greatest asset is trust. On the basis of trust one can buy anything. What one lacks in other departments he can make up for in trust. Trust is an invaluable asset which can buy much more than money can.

But the way to establish trust is not by repeating how trustworthy one is. No, it is by acting in a trustworthy manner. The world is very severe in this regard. Unless one proves one's trustworthiness by impeccable actions, one cannot expect to receive the benefit of the doubt. Only if one consistently shows oneself worthy of trust over a long period, as the cloth vendor showed himself in his dealings with the wholesale merchant, will one be accorded trust in this world.

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

THOSE who conducted scientific research in the centuries immediately preceding our own were not in any way opposed to religion. When Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) discovered the laws governing the revolution of heavenly bodies, he wrote to a friend:

The continuous rotation of the planets is not only due to the law of gravity; there must also be a divine arm in it.

When Charles Darwin (1809-1882) wrote his book, *The Origin of Species*, he expressly acknowledged the existence of God. This is how he concluded the book:

How magnificent is the concept that the Creator first created some simple forms of life, and from them astonishingly simple and wonderful species of life came into existence.

Then why was it that science turned against religion?

The real reason behind this was not, as William Draper¹ (1811–1882) and others have realized—any conflict between science and religion; it was, in fact, a conflict between science and ancient theology, which had been founded on Greek and Egyptian philosophy rather than on divine religion. Exponents of religion mistakenly thought of it as a conflict between science and religion; they therefore opposed science. The result of this was that a contemporary force, which could have been put to the use of religion, became religion’s rival from the very outset.

1. John William Draper (1811–1882) *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*



PROPHETIC WISDOM

ONE of the qualities of the Prophet of Islam was his great vision, as a result of which he urged his followers to adopt a wise approach in all their dealings. A number of sayings on this subject have appeared in books of Hadith. The Prophet's entire life was filled with examples of wisdom. While discharging his responsibilities, he adopted the way of wisdom on all occasions and at all stages. We continue to bring you examples from his life:

No Premature Action

After he received prophethood, the Prophet of Islam lived for thirteen years in Makkah where the majority of the Makkans opposed him, tormenting him in every possible way. Owing to his mission however, about two-hundred men and women accepted Islam. These Muslims would say to the Prophet again and again that they wanted to fight against this oppression. But the Prophet always exhorted them to exercise patience.

Despite injustice and oppression on the part of the enemy, the way of patience and avoidance of clashes should be adopted.

For instance, when Umar Farooq asked for the Prophet's permission to fight against the oppression of the Quraysh, the latter replied:

O Umar, we are small in number.
Seerat Ibn Kathir, 1: 441

During the last days in Makkah about two hundred people in Medina embraced Islam. When these people learned that the Prophet and his companions were being targeted for oppression, they too asked for the Prophet's permission to fight against the oppressors, but the Prophet gave them the same reply:

Show patience, for I have not been given permission to do battle.

Despite being subjected to all kinds of injustice and oppression for a period of fifteen years, the Prophet unilaterally adopted the path of patience and tolerance. Then for the first time, on the occasion of the battle of Badr, the Prophet went out along with his companions to encounter the enemy. He took this step only when he had received

God's clear promise that He would send His angels to the aid of His Messenger. (THE QURAN 8: 9)

The way of the Prophet was not to retaliate immediately against any act of oppression. He felt that, despite injustice and oppression on the part of the enemy, the way of patience and avoidance of clashes should be adopted. Practical steps were to be taken only when it was certain that they would yield the desired result.

Avoiding Confrontation

During the thirteen-year period in Makkah, the majority continued to oppose the Prophet, while only a small number of people supported him. When the Makkans found that mere opposition was not enough to extirpate his mission from Makkah, they resolved to remove him from their path by killing him. They unanimously decided that all the leaders of Makkah should attack him together and thus put an end to the movement of monotheism forever.

This was a very precarious situation. One option, which appeared to be the only one, was for the Prophet, along with his companions, to meet the enemy on the battlefield. But the Prophet saw this matter from the point of view of the resultant effect. Since in those circumstances armed confrontation was not going to yield the desired result, the Prophet followed the principle of avoidance and migrated to Medina from Makkah.

Practical steps were to be taken only when it was certain that they would yield the desired results.

The way of the Prophet of Islam was not to follow a collision course at a time of strife or controversy, but to move away from the point of conflict. Such a course enables one to conserve one's energies in order to utilize them more fruitfully at a later stage.

Concession To Others

An enduring principle of Islam is that which is called 'softening of the heart'. It means to unite people by attempting to produce a soft corner in their hearts. This end can be achieved only by making concessions to others, giving due respect to their sentiments and not harming their interests.

This policy of sympathising with others is an important part of the

Islamic movement. It is to be desired at all times in all human societies. The Prophet of Islam followed this rule throughout his life. For instance, when he came to Medina after emigration, many families of Jews and idolaters settled there, along with the believers. On reaching there the Prophet issued a statement known as the covenant of Medina. In this the Prophet declared that each group would enjoy the freedom of their culture and religion; that the controversial matters of all tribes would be settled according to their respective tribal traditions; and that no coercion would be resorted to in matters of religion and culture.

The way of the Prophet of Islam was not to follow a collision course at a time of strife or controversy, but to move away from the point of conflict.

The Prophet made special concessions to the Jews in many matters. By doing so, the Prophet aimed at fraternizing with the Jews, in order that they might be brought closer to his faith. (Tafsir al-Qurtubi, 2: 150)

The way of the Prophet was not to return opposition for opposition. It was rather to make allowances in the face of opposition. His thinking was not to bring people into his fold by means of suppression. On the contrary, his way was to soften their hearts and bring them to his side through affection and kindness.

Accepting The Status Quo

Whenever a controversy arises between two people or two groups, a practical working arrangement ultimately becomes established. An attempt to change this status quo in most cases results in futility or in all-out strife. What normally happens is that the status quo continues. If not, mutual retaliation results in further losses. In this pointless engagement, precious opportunities are also wasted.

In such a controversial matter, the Prophet's method was to accept the status quo. The great benefit of this status-quoism is that it gives one the respite to consolidate one's energies. By removing oneself from the scene of controversy, one may strengthen oneself so greatly that a time will come when ultimately the balance of power will change without any major confrontation.

The Prophet of Islam adopted this wise course on the occasion of

the drawing up of the Treaty of Hdaybiya. When the Makkans heard that their opponents had gathered at Hdaybiya, they too reached there to stop the Muslims from going any further. The Prophet at this juncture was on his way to Makkah to perform the rite of *Umra* (minor pilgrimage). Thus a situation of deadlock came to be created at Hdaybiya. The Prophet did not resort to breaking this deadlock in order to move ahead. Instead he withdrew and came back to Medina. It amounted to accepting the status quo already established between the Prophet and the other party. This wisdom gave the Prophet an opportunity for further consolidation, which became a reality within a period of a mere two years. It was at that stage that the Prophet's victorious entry into Makkah became a possibility.

Ease In Difficulty

The Prophet of Islam was successful in taking over Makkah in 629 A.D. Then he set off from Makkah for Taif, along with his companions. In those days there were no well-laid roads in and around Makkah, and on the journey they had to walk along a narrow path, which lay between two hills.

The way of the Prophet was not to return opposition for opposition. It was rather to make allowances in the face of opposition.

When the Prophet reached that point, he asked his companions what its name was. They replied that it was called *Azzaiqa*, meaning the 'narrow path.' The Prophet said:

No, it is rather a broad path.
Seerah ibn Hisham, 4: 127

On this journey the Prophet was accompanied by ten-thousand of his companions. If they had attempted to go along this path walking several abreast, it would certainly have been difficult to do so, due to its narrowness. But because they went along it in single file, despite its being narrow, it was easy to do so. It was this practical wisdom, which the Prophet pointed to in his reply. We find an important secret of life in this incident: the necessity to adapt our strategy to circumstances.

This practice relates to all matters in life. By being adaptable all life's difficulties could be resolved.

The Policy Of Gradualness In Reform

Aisha, the Prophet's wife, has been recorded as saying that:

The first verses of the Quran to be revealed;
those making mention of heaven and hell,
were short ones.

It was only when people became conditioned
to accept Islamic teaching that verses
dealing with what is lawful and unlawful,
began to be revealed.

And if injunctions like:
'Do not drink wine,' and 'do not commit adultery,'
had been revealed first, people would have
refused to abandon these practices.

Fathul Bari, 8: 655

This tradition tells us of a very important policy of the Prophet. It is the same practical wisdom, which is called gradualness. The reform of human beings is a very difficult and complex task. Generally because people have become accustomed to certain ideas and habits, they hold them to be right and proper. That is why they do not readily accept anything new. In such a situation the only way to reform people is to follow the path of wisdom and do everything gradually.

The Prophet of Islam first of all influenced the mind-set of the people in Arabia. And only when they had developed the ability to accept reforms, did he introduce the commands of the *Shariah* (Islamic law) to them. If the Prophet had attempted to impose the laws of *Shariah* upon them, without striving for their intellectual purification—this being against human nature—his efforts towards revolution in Arab society could never have been crowned with success.



Small is beautiful

Small, individual changes can indeed bring big results.

TRY, TRY, AND TRY AGAIN

A YOUNG man, who was employed as an ordinary worker in a small factory, soon learnt the entire art of the business and set up his own factory. He initially invested only ₹5,000 in his business, but then by dint of continuous hard work, over a long period, his business progressively increased until he became the owner of a big company. One day, narrating his life story to his friends, he said: "Just as a young child grows into boyhood after fifteen years, so does a business. I have not reached this stage in one day. It has been a fifteen-year struggle."

In truth every piece of work is accomplished in 'fifteen' years, be it of an individual or a nation, be it a business or a social service. Those who long for a recipe for instant success are, in fact, living in a fool's paradise. It is all very well to say that a hop, step and jump can take you right to your destination. But as soon as one comes face to face with reality, one realises that this is just an illusion.

The only condition of success is continuous effort.

Glenn Cunningham, an American distance runner and athlete, who became champion of the one-mile race, witnessed the school in which he was studying go up in flames. His own experience was terrible. His feet were so badly burnt that he could not even move his legs. The doctors lost all hope of his ever walking or running. They said that only a miracle could save him. Surprisingly Glenn Cunningham's incapacity excited in him a new zeal and eagerness to walk and run. All his mental faculties concentrated on his decision to walk.

So he began to experiment with different kinds of exercises till he hit upon a novel idea. It was to drag himself along by holding on to the handle of a moving plough. When his feet could even so much as rest on the ground, he felt encouraged and intensified his efforts. Finally, the miracle of which the doctors had so despaired took place. The new technique was a tremendous success and ultimately, he could not only walk, but could also run. Later, he entered for a race. He set a new record and became a champion of the one-mile race, earning the nickname 'Kansas Flyer'. But this grand success was not achieved

in a few days. He had to spend 'fifteen years' realizing his goal. Only after a fifteen-year stint had it been possible for him to become a racing champion.

In truth, no success is possible in this world without working for 'fifteen years'. It is God alone who has the power to achieve instant success. But God has not created this world on the basis of instant success. Man must learn his lesson and should not fritter away his time in futile efforts.

**In truth, no success is possible in this world
without working for 'fifteen years'.**

In this world of God, innumerable events are taking place; all of which are based on eternal, immutable laws. Not even a blade of grass grows here on the ground as a result of wishful thinking; not even an ant can manage to live by ignoring the realities of life.

How is it possible then for man to change divine laws? The only condition to succeed is continuous effort, that is, to make such unflagging efforts, as are essential to achieve the desired objectives in the world of God, according to the law of God. By following the same principle we can achieve success in this world; and it is this very principle which will bring us success in the next world.



NIHIL EST MELIUS QUAM VITA DILIGENTISSIMA.

Nothing is better than a most diligent life.

SOME MAKE THEMSELVES, OTHERS MAKE HISTORY

THERE are two types of people in this world—the self-making type and the history-making type. The aim of those who are self-making is to serve themselves; whereas history-making people seek to serve humanity as a whole.

A Self-Making Person

The attention of a self-making person revolves around himself. He hovers around those areas where his own self-interest is likely to be served; where there is no profit to be gained for him, he does not care to venture. His heart flutters with excitement when he is set to make some gain, but if there is nothing to be gained, no excitement is aroused within him. Personal gain is uppermost in his mind; he will sacrifice everything in order to achieve it. He abides neither by promise nor by principle. Free of the influence of both—moral exigencies and the needs of humanity—he can put everything aside in pursuit of his own ends. All other considerations fade into insignificance as he relentlessly seeks to fulfil his selfish desires.

A History-Making Person

A history-making person is quite different. Emerging from his own shell, he lives not for himself but for a higher purpose. What matters to him is principle, not profit. He cares not whether he himself wins or loses; what is of importance to him is that his ideal should be served. It is as if he has detached himself from his own person and pinned his flag to the needs of humanity as a whole.

What matters to a history-making person is principle, not profit.

In order to become a history-making person there is one thing that has to be done: one needs to stop being self-making. As soon as a person effaces himself, he becomes capable of building for the future of humanity. Such a person lays personal grievances to one side. He does not differentiate between his own people and others. As his own self-interest and ambitions evaporate before his eyes, he shows no reaction, as if all this were not happening to him at all. Such a man lives

a life of principles, not interest. He does not deviate from the path of justice, even when it concerns his opponent or enemy. Living a cautious life he remains patient in adversity. In times of personal disaster he does not become full of hate, pride and egoism. He is strict with himself and tolerant towards others. He has a realistic attitude, welcomes failures and learns from them. He is thus able to progress in spite of setbacks.

**A history-making person is strict with himself
and tolerant towards others.**

He realizes that he does not need to change the situation; rather, he needs to change himself. He understands that any change in the external world is not a solution, because each unwanted situation will be replaced by yet another undesirable situation. He does not adopt a pro-change strategy, but accepts the status quo by ignoring the problems. He realizes that it is very easy to complain, but it is impossible to change the situation. So he opts for the possible and leaves out what is impossible. By adopting this formula he is able to become a master of the situation.

It is people such as these who are not only destined to succeed in life but also forge human history. They are the ones who, of their own free will, are concerned about the rest of humanity. They have no rights to be safeguarded; they have only responsibilities which they discharge, whatever the cost to themselves.



Solution to Stress

*There is only one true solution to the problem of stress
and that is to adopt the correct attitude to stress—
that of managing it instead of trying to eliminate it
or reacting negatively to it.*

MORAL AND ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOCIETY

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

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

Differences lead to intellectual exchange and intellectual development.

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

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

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

There are two main branches of religions: the Aryan religions and the

Semitic religions. A study of both branches of religions shows that in terms of moral teachings, there are great similarities between them, and likewise with Islam. For example:

Mankind as one family

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

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

THE QURAN 4: 1

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

The Prophet of Islam declared:

Mankind is a divine family.
Hadith-Al Baihaqi 6: 2528

The Prophet of Islam used to rise early in the morning and say after his morning prayer: "O God, I bear witness that all men and women are sisters and brothers to each other." (Hadith-Abu Daud 1508)

In terms of theology there are differences between religions; however, almost all religions preach similar moral values.

These references quoted from Islamic scriptures, are the same teachings which you can find in other religions like Hinduism, Judaism, and Christianity, etc. Common teachings of this kind in all the religions provide the initial base of a good relationship between all men and women. In a family, all its members live with a sense of oneness, a sense which inculcates in family members the spirit of unity and harmony.

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

Love and Compassion

There is a famous saying of Jesus Christ:

Love your enemy.
NEW TESTAMENT, Luke 6: 35

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

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

THE QURAN, 41: 34

In a family, all its members live with a sense of oneness, which inculcates the spirit of unity and harmony.

Love or compassion is the greatest social value; it is the basis of all moral teachings or moral requirements. And it is also a fact that this teaching is found in every religion. If you study the various religions, you will find that all of them try to promote a 'culture of love' in society. To build a love-based society is the sole target of every religion.

Do unto others as you would have others do unto you

The Prophet of Islam once said:

Do with others what you want others to do with you.
Hadith-Sahih Muslim, 12

The same maxim is to be found in Judaism. Rabbi Hillel the Elder is known to have said: "What is hateful (or hurtful) to you, do not do to any other man." (Talmud-Shabbat, 31a)

This is a universal teaching, which you can find in almost every religion, in one verse or the other. This religious teaching gives us a very simple criterion for living as a good member of society.

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

Peace at any cost

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

Peace is the best.

THE QURAN, 4: 128

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

Blessed are the peacemakers.

NEW TESTAMENT, Matthew 5: 9

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

No religious institution can play the role of political master. And no political master can play the role of a religious institution.

Good Social Behaviour

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

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

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

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

**Love is the greatest social value;
the basis of all moral teachings and requirements.**

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

Different roles of Religion and Political Administration

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

Political rule has a basic regulatory function in the practical matters of a nation. It is put in place to maintain peace and harmony among the people and to ensure justice and check crimes. No religious institution can play the role of political masters. And no political master—given the limitations of political administration—can play the role of a religious institution. Both the institutions have their specific roles and both institutions are complementary to each other. It is the complementary roles of the two institutions that ensures building of a better society.



DISADVANTAGE TURNED TO ADVANTAGE

MAHATMA Gandhi was very shy by nature. In his book, *My Experiments with Truth*, he confesses that it was a long time before he managed to shake off his shyness. While studying in London, he joined a vegetarian society. At one of its meetings he was asked to make a speech. He stood up, but was unable to express himself. Finally he brought himself to voice a few words of thanks and sat down. On another occasion, when he was invited to express his ideas on vegetarian food, he set his thoughts down on paper, but was not even able to read out what he himself has written. Someone, however, taking pity on him, read out his discourse for him.

After passing his examination in law from London, he started his practice in Bombay. Here again his shyness was a stumbling block. When he appeared before the judge in his first case, he was so nervous that he could not say anything. He had to tell his client that he would not be able to pursue his case, and that he should choose another lawyer for himself.

However, as Gandhiji writes, this apparent disadvantage turned to his advantage:

My hesitancy in speech, which was once an annoyance, is now a pleasure. Its greatest benefit has been that it has taught me the economy of words. I have naturally formed the habit of restraining my thoughts. And I can now give myself a certificate that a thoughtless word hardly ever escaped my tongue or pen.

Mahatma Gandhi was well-known for his thoughtful and economical manner of speech. But this outstanding trait only came from another trait which few would consider outstanding. Initially his shyness prevented him from speaking in public; later on it made him thoughtful and economical when he spoke.

Gentleness

*Gentleness is an attribute of successful people,
while haughtiness signals imminent failure.*

CRITICISM AND DENIGRATION

THE way to deal with a statement of which one is critical is not to make personal attacks upon the speaker, or add to, subtract from, or distort the original statement, but to counter it with some rational argument supported by an array of facts. This is sound and correct criticism, and as such is not only permissible but desirable.

On the other hand, rejecting a statement outright without referring to it in its original form, and without presenting any cogent argument against it, is an unfair and reprehensible practice. The Quran states that God instructed His Prophet to say to his opponents:

I have received veritable proofs from my Lord, yet you deny Him.

THE QURAN 6: 57

This shows that a Prophet in this world stands on the bedrock of reason. His is not an idle claim: he is supported by clear evidence.

The disbelievers, on the other hand, are recorded by the Quran as saying, "Give no heed to this Quran. Interrupt its reading with booing and laughter, so that you may gain the upper hand" (THE QURAN 41: 26).

Those who wish to reject a statement who cannot counter it with sound arguments, not infrequently fall back on derision or *ad homineum*. That is to say that they attempt to discredit the statement by shouting it down and raising false or irrelevant objections to it. In every age, this is what the Prophets have had to suffer at the hands of their opponents.

When an exponent of a fact, or facts, expresses himself in a cool and reasoned way and his opponents adopt a derogatory or even defamatory tone, this difference in approach is a sure indication that the former is in the right and his opponents are in the wrong. The Quran tells us that the language of the Prophets is the language of reason, while it is the men of no faith who mouth the language of disparagement.



SEEKING THE RIGHT ALTERNATIVES

ALUCKLESS passenger rushed panting into the station, just as his train was steaming out. His watch—unaccountably slow by ten minutes—had let him down. “Don’t worry, Babuji,” sympathised a passing porter. “There will be another train along in about a couple of hours. Why go away? Just wait here for it on this same platform.” The passenger, keen to reach his destination, decided to accept his advice, even if it meant waiting two, long tedious hours. Just getting to where he wanted to go was too important to him to think of expending time and energy, leaving and returning to the station and perhaps missing his train once more. So he stayed right where he was, and catch his train he did.

When we miss a train, there is always the comforting knowledge that there is that next train coming along.

When we miss a train, there is always the comforting knowledge that there is that next train coming along. That is the lesson that the platform teaches. It is then up to us to make the correct decision about our next move. But it is surprising how many people fail to grasp this reality. They are inexplicably plunged into gloom and depression when they fail initially to grasp an opportunity, and frequently adopt such a pessimistic attitude that they fritter away their precious energies in blaming others for their failures. How much better it would be if they were to make a proper assessment of the situation, taking all possibilities into account, and then seek new ways and means of achieving their goals, even if it means a lengthy wait. This is simply a matter of patience and determination. There is always that 'next train' for them to catch. It is just a question of being properly alert to this possibility, and being ready to avail of that God-given second opportunity.

Situations that require seeking the next opportunity after having missed the first one will arise many a time, in different fields, and in everyone’s life.

Suppose you work in an office, and for reasons which you fail to comprehend, you are dismissed. In such a situation, if initial attempts to clear your name and have yourself honourably reinstated come to

naught, it is seldom worthwhile persisting in your efforts. It is far better to remove oneself from the situation and try to break new ground elsewhere. That way, you can sometimes do even better than before.

**Things which are impossible to obtain by
direct confrontation can be achieved by the
patient fostering of mutual goodwill.**

Often when someone does not pay you your dues, your first inclination is to enter into legal battles with him, or wage a relentless psychological war on him. Either course should be eschewed; for, the net result is generally wasted time and money. Years can go by without your receiving anything in return for a great deal of energy spent.

No, it is better to ignore the injustice done to you, and instead put your trust in hard work to get what you want out of life. It is perfectly possible that, through sheer diligence, you will succeed in achieving all those things you wanted others to give you as a matter of right.

Most personal problems are the result of a limited outlook on life. If people were to broaden their perspectives, they would soon realize that there are many different ways of approaching the same problem. It would, above all, become clear to them that things which are impossible to obtain by direct confrontation, can be achieved by the patient fostering of mutual goodwill. Where provocation and retaliation have failed, patience and human concern will succeed.

Availing the next opportunity is the right alternative.



Diligence

*Through sheer diligence, you will succeed in achieving
all those things you wanted others to give you
as a matter of right.*

THE LESSON OF DEATH

FROM the moment a culprit hears his death sentence, he is as good as dead. It makes no difference whether his execution is to take place the very next day or weeks later. Life simply loses all meaning. He falls silent and his smiles fade. Those hands, which were so freely raised to strike the weak and vulnerable, fall limp and lifeless by his sides.

Everyone alive today is to be 'hanged' tomorrow. But everyone is lost in his today and blissfully unaware of his tomorrow. In this world, everyone is in some sense a culprit, but few pay heed to the fact that death can catch us unawares—it can even strike tomorrow.

Everyone is lost in his today and blissfully unaware of his tomorrow.

Man lives in this world as an unthinking, pleasure-loving, materially ambitious creature, who enjoys having friends and riches. He revels in all this. Then a strange event takes place. Death comes unannounced, without his leave. He stops in his tracks. His eyes become sightless. In an instant he is bereft of all his worldly possessions—all that he holds dear—and he is carried away to the solitude of the grave.

This event makes plain the reality. It wordlessly conveys man's sudden fall from power to powerlessness, from light to darkness, from material repletion to nothingness. Before death he finds himself in a world where his will is his own. After death he will be ushered into a world where he will be forced to bow to the will of Another.

Were man to remember this reality, his life would be transformed. It would then appear inane to oppress the poor, hapless individuals in his clutches. He would realize that it is fruitless to oppress others if tomorrow he would have to come under the control of Another. He would feel ashamed of having indulged in the idea of his own greatness, because greatness that does not endure is of no value.



THE HEREAFTER

THOSE huge masses of ice, which we know as icebergs, found floating in the seas of the North and South poles, number amongst the most deceptive and, therefore, most dangerous phenomena to be found in nature.

Their deceptiveness lies in the fact that no matter how huge, or wonderful in configuration, what we see of them amounts to only one-tenth of their enormous bulk. What lies below the surface of the ocean, spreading far and beyond the visible perimeter, poses tremendous hazards to the unwary. In some ways, our lives are like those floating mountains of ice.

The part we spend in this world—about a hundred years, or less—is like the part of the iceberg, which is visible above the surface. We can see it, touch it, and feel it. We can take its measure and deal with it effectively.

But the part, which comes after death, is like the submerged part—vast, unfathomable and fraught with peril. It is something which defies the imagination, but which we must nevertheless try to comprehend, for that is the part of human life which God has decreed should be eternal and, as such, ineluctable.

**Nothing that we can experience in this world will ever
match the extremes of agony and
the bliss of life after death.**

We are all familiar with the facts of our origin and the course which life takes from the womb until death. But at the end of our lifespan, whether it terminates in youth or in old age, our familiarity with the nature of things comes to an end. It has been surmised that death means total and final annihilation. But this is not so.

Death is simply a means of consigning us to a new womb: to the womb of the universe itself. From that point, we are ushered into another world: the Hereafter. While the present, physical world as we know it has a finite time-frame, the Hereafter stretches away from us into infinity.

We fondly imagine that there is some parallel between the pleasures and pains of this world and those of the next. But, in truth, nothing that we can experience in this world will ever match the extremes of agony and bliss of life after death. Those who merit punishment in the Hereafter will be condemned to suffer the most horrific pain for all time to come. But those who merit God's blessings in the Hereafter shall know the most wonderful joy and contentment.

Can we perceive the Hereafter?

It is because life in this world is intended to be a testing-ground that the world of the Hereafter remains beyond our reach. But all around us, we have innumerable signs which can help us, by analogy, to understand and appreciate the nature of the world to come. Imagine a room which ostensibly consists of four walls, furniture, a few material objects and some human occupants. To all outward appearances, that is what the room adds up to. But the moment we switch on the TV set, we are introduced to a hitherto unsuspected world of colour, movement, and highly vocal human activity.

The sole aim of our earthly existence should be to strive for success in the life to come.

This world, with its scenery and very alive human beings had existed all along. It only needed the flip of a switch to make us aware of it. Similarly, our terrestrial existence is made up of a world within a world. The world we know is concrete, visible, audible, and tangible.

The 'other' world, the world within it, or rather, beyond it, is not however, one which can be apprehended through any of the normal human senses; no switch can be turned on to make us understand what it is really like. Only death can do this for us. And when we reopen our eyes after death we find that what had formerly been impalpable, and quite beyond human comprehension is now a stark, overwhelming reality. It is then that we grasp what had hitherto existed, but remained invisible.

Are we Accountable?

Once we have become clear in our minds that the after-life truly exists, we realize that the sole aim of our earthly existence should be to strive for success in the life to come; for, unlike the present ephemeral world,

the Hereafter is eternal and real. What we understand by suffering and solace in this world cannot be compared with the suffering and solace of the Hereafter.

Many individuals lead immoral, even criminal existences because they feel that we are free to do as we please in this world. Freedom we do have, but it exists only so that God may distinguish between the good and the evil, and determine who deserves a place of honour and dignity in the Hereafter and who should be condemned to eternal disgrace.

While there is nothing to prevent the good and the evil from living cheek by jowl in this world, they will be separated in the Hereafter like the wheat from the chaff and will be judged according to their record in this life. Some will be condemned to an eternal Hell of pain and distress, while others will be blessed with eternal bliss and pleasure. Each will get his just desserts.

This World and the Hereafter

Just as there are two sides to every life in this world, there are two aspects of every act in relation to this world and the Hereafter. One aspect of each act is our acceptance of it, as what it is seen to be in this world. The other aspect is what results from this act, in terms of the Hereafter.

**It is because life in this world is intended to be
a testing-ground that the world of the
Hereafter remains beyond our reach.**

Imam Ahmad narrates that the Caliph Umar once said: "No drink of milk or honey is better than swallowing one's anger." In actuality, to swallow, or overcome one's anger is an extremely bitter experience, but in the Hereafter the result of doing so is sweeter by far than milk and honey. Today we reap the worldly fruits of our actions! Tomorrow, in the Hereafter, we shall have to face up to the results of our deeds and misdeeds.

Today, we can see only one aspect of our actions—that of immediate pleasure or gain—but the Day of Resurrection will place us in a position to see much more. Just as a person standing on top of a wall can look down on both sides, so shall we be able to see both aspects of the

truth. Not only shall we watch our entire history unreel before us like a film, but also witness the consequences of our own worldly actions.

As the Quran says:

Then shall each soul know what it has sent forward (to the Hereafter)
and what it has kept back (in the world behind).

THE QURAN 82: 5

Whatever was done for worldly reasons will be left behind, unconsidered. Only those actions which were carried out with the Hereafter in mind will benefit us in the life to come.

The present world and the Hereafter are two sides of the same event. The worldly side is trivial and temporary, while the Hereafter side is substantive and permanent. It is to the latter side that we must face up to after death. Here, one has complete freedom to live out one's worldly existence as one wills; in the life-to-come, one will have no choice about the future course of one's life. One will either be raised to eternal glory, or cast down into the pit of eternal suffering.



Bearing Losses

*Anyone who has divided his time
and his energy in many activities
cannot achieve a great goal.*

*A great goal necessarily
requires total dedication,
that is, working for a specific target
by making concerted effort.*

*One incurs losses at various fronts
due to this concentration on one goal,
but the secret of any great success
lies in bearing these losses.*

THE WORD OF GOD

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

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

My servants who believe, My earth is vast, so worship Me alone. Every soul shall taste death and then to Us you shall return. We shall lodge forever those who believe and do good works in the mansions of Paradise beside which rivers flow. How excellent is the reward of those who labour, and who are steadfast and put their trust in their Lord. 29: 56-59

How many creatures cannot fend for themselves! God provides for them and for you. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. 29: 60

Sometimes a change is necessary in the mode of performing a task. This may require a change in the sphere of influence, in the way that the Hodaybiyah Pact shifted the scene of action from the battlefield to the field of missionary work. But more often it requires a major step, like migration; for example, the migration of the Prophet from Makkah to Medina.

In these verses the faithful living in Makkah were told that if the people of Makkah were harassing them, they should leave Makkah, migrate to some other place, and carry on God's worship there. This shows that the exercise of patience and trust means being steadfast in prayer and not persisting in clashing with enemies. Had it been God's will that they should engage in hostilities under any circumstances, then the instructions would have been to continue fighting with their opponents and not, in any event, to move away.

If you ask them who it is that has created the heavens and the earth and subjugated the sun and the moon, they will say, 'God.' How then

are they turned away? God gives abundantly to whom He will and sparingly to whom He pleases. God has full knowledge of all things.

29: 61-62

And if you ask them who it is that sends down water from the sky and revives the earth with it after its death, they will surely answer, 'God.' Then praise be to God. But most of them do not understand. 29: 63

Creating the earth and the sky was such a major event that only Almighty God could perform it. The movement of the sun and moon, the falling of rain and the sprouting of greenery from the soil of the earth are phenomena too great to have been brought into existence by anybody other than God.

Those who indulge in polytheism do not themselves believe that they have brought these great wonders into existence. In spite of this, many people worship beings others than God in the hope that they will increase their worldly blessings. However, when all powers are vested in God, who else but He can exert influence on the distribution of the daily sustenance?

The life of this world is nothing but sport and a diversion. It is the life of the Hereafter which is the only true life, if they but knew it. 29: 64

When they board a vessel, they call on God, sincere in their faith for Him alone; but when He brings them safe to land, they begin to ascribe partners to Him. And thus they may show utter ingratitude for Our favours; let them enjoy themselves for a time. But they will soon come to know. 29: 65-66

The real reason for a man going astray is that he is so completely engrossed in the glamour and problems of the world that he cannot rise above them and think independently.

In order to arrive at the Truth, one has to raise oneself above external and superficial appearances. Most people cannot do so, and that is why they do not find the Truth.

In the world, time and again, man has experiences which remind him of his helplessness. At that time all his conditioning falls away from him, and the real and natural man in him is awakened. But as soon as conditions return again to normal, he becomes as neglectful and

arrogant as before. Among these crucial experiences is that of a voyage, which is mentioned in the verse.

Man should know that the chance to exercise freedom is given to him during this life for only a few days. After death, he will have to face a completely new world with a completely different set of problems.

Have they not seen how We have granted them a safe sanctuary, though all around them people are snatched away? Would they still believe in falsehood, and deny the favour of God? Who does greater wrong than he who invents a lie about God or rejects the truth when it comes to him? Is Hell not the home for those who deny the truth? We will surely guide in Our ways those who strive hard for Our cause, God is surely with the righteous. 29: 67-69

The Sacred House of Makkah, i.e. the Kabah, is a wonderful gift of Almighty God. God fills the hearts of people with awe whenever they see it, so that even the overbearing and arrogant drop their evil ways on reaching there. This sanctity of the Kabah was one of the signs of God's power. It called for people to open their hearts to God. But what the worshippers of falsehood did was to ascribe God's attributes to entities other than God and wrongly divert people's instinct of devotion towards them. But even worse, when the Prophet Muhammad advised them to renounce the imaginary gods and bow down before the one real God, they became hostile to him.

In such an atmosphere the loss suffered by the believers in the world is more than made up for by the rewards bestowed on them by God. Distancing themselves from material comforts, they come closer to the state of spiritual experience. The outward glitter of things is no longer in view, but the inner realities of things are laid bare to them.



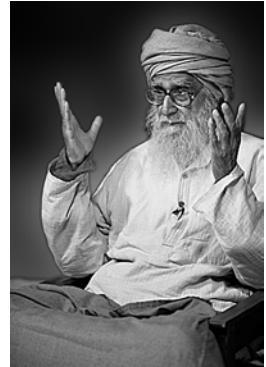
God at all times

*It is possible for man to contact God at any moment.
This concept gives one unshakable confidence
and a source of help in every situation.*

ASK MAULANA

What is the Importance of a Promise?

In mutual dealings in social life, it often happens that a person gives his word to another. There is apparently no third person or group between the two, yet there is always a third present and that is God who is the supreme witness. That is why every promise becomes a divine promise.



Therefore, man should be extremely sensitive about giving his word. His conviction should be that every commitment made between two persons is under the watchful eyes of God, and that he will be accountable for its fulfilment in the court of God. This compels him to be highly responsible as regards his promises. Whenever he gives his word to anyone he should make it a point to keep it.

People who invariably fulfil their promises are predictable characters in a society, and give their society that particular quality which exists on a vast scale throughout the universe. Every part of this universe is functioning with the most exact precision. For instance, we can learn in advance about any star's or planet's rotation, and where it will be moving after a hundred or even a thousand years. Similarly, we know in advance what the boiling point of water will be. In this way the entire universe evinces a predictable character.

Many other virtues come in the wake of the regular fulfilment of promises. One of these is mutual trust. In a society where mutual trust exists, there is no discord and dissension between people; there is an atmosphere of confidence and peacefulness as there is no fear of promises being broken.

Readiness to fulfil promises is a commendable trait, and it is spirituality that makes man the possessor of this highest of human virtues.

What is Patience?

Patience is the exercise of restraint in trying situations. It is a virtue, which enables the individual to proceed towards worthy goals, undeterred by adverse circumstances or repeated provocations. If he

allows himself to become upset by opposition, taunts or other kinds of unpleasantness, he will never reach his goals. He will simply become enmeshed in irrelevancies.

The only way to deal with the irksome side of daily living is to exercise patience. Patience will ensure that whenever one has some bitter experience, he will opt for the way of tolerance rather than that of reaction to provocation. It will enable one to absorb shocks and to continue undeterred on one's onward journey.

Sabr or Patience, as well as being a practical solution to the problems faced in the outside world, is also a means of positive character building. One who fails to exercise patience gives free rein to negative thoughts and feelings, and develops a personality, which is likewise negative; while one who remains patient is so morally bolstered by his own positive thoughts and feelings that he develops a positive personality.

Sabr is no retreat. *Sabr* only amounts to taking the initiative along the path of wisdom and reason as opposed to the path of emotions. *Sabr* gives one the strength to restrain one's emotions in delicate situations and rather to use one's brains to find a course of action along result-oriented lines.

The present world is fashioned in such a way that everyone is necessarily confronted with unpleasant matters at one time or another. Unbearable circumstances have to be borne somehow; harrowing events have to be witnessed and all kinds of pain have to be suffered. In such situations, succumbing to impatience leads to the kind of unnecessary emotional involvement which is counter-productive, while a demonstration of patience has a healing, beneficial effect, allowing one to tread the path of discreet avoidance.

Success in the present world is destined only for those who adopt the path of patience in adverse circumstances.



Please send your questions to
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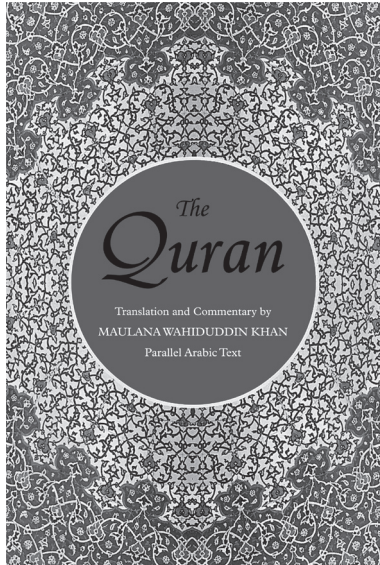
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The Quran

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY
MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN
PARALLEL ARABIC TEXT

This concise, easy-to-read commentary will help you understand the deeper meaning of the Quran and its relevance in the world today. While focusing on the main themes of the Quran, such as God-realization, enlightenment, closeness to God, remembrance, prayer, peace and spirituality, this guide to the Quran will show you how through reflection and contemplation, you can learn divine lessons from the Signs of God that are a part of our world.

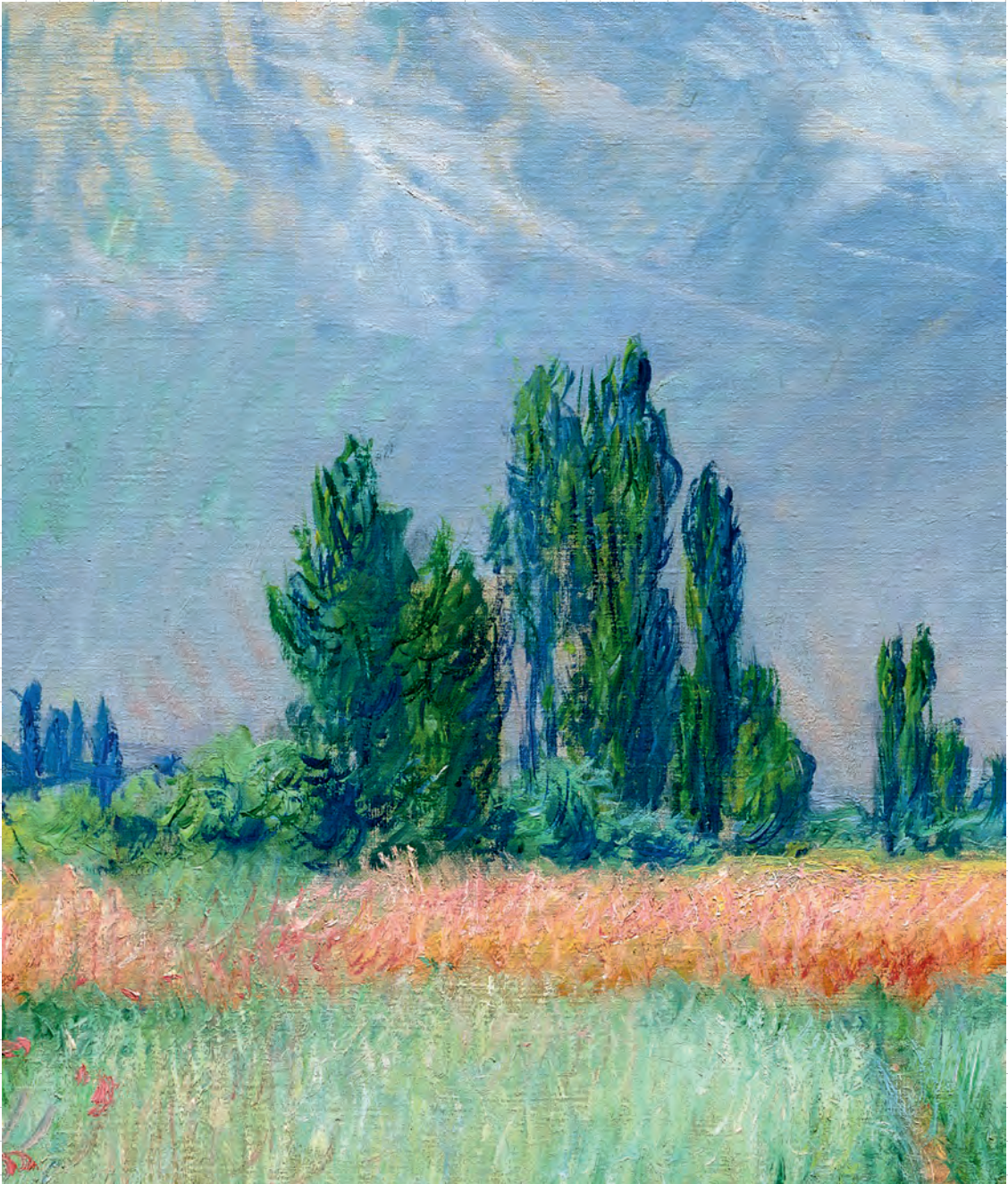


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