

ENGLISH MONTHLY ISSUE 39 MARCH 2016 ₹35

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

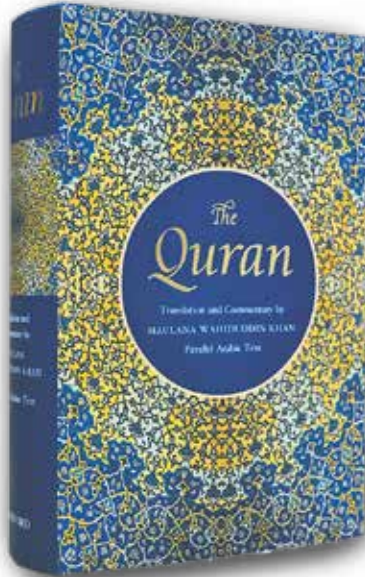


The attachment to forms rather than meanings is man's greatest weakness.

The Quran

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY
MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN
PARALLEL ARABIC TEXT

This commentary on the Quran is a concise, easy-to-read guide that enables today's readers to understand the deeper meanings of the Quran and to reflect upon its relevance in the present world. It focuses on the main themes of the Quran, such as God-realization, enlightenment, closeness to God, remembrance, prayer, peace and spirituality. It lays stress on the fact that through reflection, deep thinking and contemplation, divine lessons can be learnt from the signs of God scattered across the world.



This commentary thus explains the meaning of the Quran in such a way as to give readers a clearer understanding of the message of the Quran and helps them in finding their own way of making it relevant to themselves.

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ISSUE 39 MARCH 2016

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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

002, HM WIMBERLY, 6, BERLIE STREET CROSS
LANGFORD TOWN, BENGALURU 560025, INDIA

PRINTED AT

COSMOS PRINTERS AND PUBLISHERS
450, 3RD CROSS, WILSON GARDEN, BENGALURU 560027

ACCESS ONLINE AT

www.spiritofislam.co.in

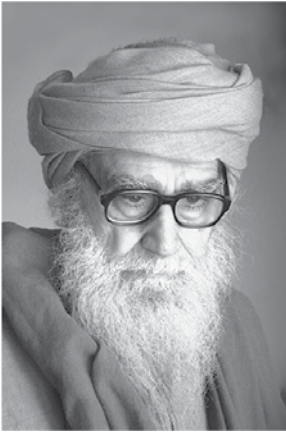
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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 recognised 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.

THE last week of December 15 was full of new experiences for me. Travelling non-stop, on a 12000 kilometre journey from Delhi to Canada, I reached Toronto where I found that Canada had its own different culture. Just as waterfalls all over the world are unique, for example, the Niagara Falls of Canada, so also is Canada quite unique as a nation.

My journey was undertaken at the invitation of the RIS (Reviving the Islamic Spirit) annual conference. Founded by Mr. Fauzan Khan and colleagues, this organisation aims to mobilise the Muslim youth of Canada. To a great extent, judging by the large numbers of Muslim youth from different countries who participated in this program, its members have met this goal. In the course of conversation with the organisation's young leaders, I learnt that they conceived the idea of forming such an organisation in the wake of 9/11. The event of 9/11 amounted to hitting the "industrial nose" of America directly and the western world indirectly. This experience—a great shock for the entire western world—generated negative feelings about Islam. It profoundly affected the leaders of this organisation and led to their firm resolve to project to the world at large the correct image of Islam and Muslims. The first conference of this organisation was held in 2003. Mr. Fauzan Khan soon found dynamic companions and the movement progressed in leaps and bounds.

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

Mulling over this experience, I felt that 9/11 was a thesis while the RIS was its antithesis (to use the phrase of Hegel and Marx). It follows a law of nature which in the Quran is called the law of repelling (2: 251). This means that whenever a negative situation develops in human history, a combination of factors inherent in nature instigates a new process conducive to a positive turn of events, culminating in a new and better age. One example in the history of Islam is the Tartar attack on the Abbasid empire in the 13th century, which had a devastating effect upon the Muslim world. This was apparently a negative event but it ultimately had a positive outcome. Peaceful *dawah* work was instigated amongst the Muslims inspired by Shaykh Jamaluddin of Iran. The results of these developments have been described by Prof. Philip K. Hitti in these words:

'The religion of Muslims has conquered where their arms had failed.' This positive process has started on a large scale. Muslims are thinking along the lines of *Dawah* and are spreading the message of the Quran far and wide. I am certain that this trend will go on increasing to the point where we will see the dawn of a new future.

Whenever a negative situation develops in human history, a combination of factors inherent in nature instigates a new process conducive to a positive turn of events, culminating in a new and better age.

A large number of programmes were organised in Toronto. In the course of every speech I made, I talked of peace, giving due acknowledgement to the global contribution of the West. I explained that western civilization was pro-Islam and that the concept of Islamophobia was totally baseless. Every speech was followed by a question and answer session. This was a new experience for me. Many questions were raised and these were positive. Indeed the audience was moved to tears. They liked my speeches so much that they gave me a standing ovation.

This phenomenon reflects a sign of change among the Muslims. Just before I was to leave Canada, I was requested

to give a concluding message to the audience. Very briefly I said: '*Assalaamu-u-Alaikum wa Rahmatullah*. Today I am leaving for India. I would like to give you two short pieces of advice. Firstly, make God your greatest concern. Secondly, behave in a friendly manner towards all human beings. May God bless you. May God help you to realise this noble cause.' Judging by the great appreciation shown by the audience, my words had obviously made a strong impact. □

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan
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ISLAM—CREATOR OF THE MODERN AGE

Beginning of Modern Science

THE American astronaut, Neil Armstrong, was the first man to set foot on the moon after a four-day space voyage on July 21, 1969. Setting foot on the moon, he uttered these words which are now a part of history: “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.”

Armstrong, along with his colleagues, Edwin Aldrin and Michael Collins, undertook this journey on a special spacecraft, the Apollo 11. In the final stage they boarded a lunar vehicle named Eagle to land on the surface of the moon.

The Apollo spacecraft was not as fanciful as some of us might imagine a magic flying chariot. It was a scientifically designed machine made in accordance with our observation of the unchanging laws of nature. The ability to traverse such immense distances in space on such spacecraft is entirely due to man’s correct application of his empirical knowledge.

These laws, the application of which has enabled man to reach the moon, have existed throughout the universe since time immemorial, yet it took man centuries to discover them. Why did it take so many thousands of years in the course of man’s development to launch himself into space?

Monotheism opened the doors of research and investigation by displacing nature from its sacred pedestal.

The answer is the prevalence of polytheism, a creed which looked upon things and creatures as deities, and encouraged their worship. In ancient times polytheism dominated the world. Man considered the moon a deity, just as he held all kinds of other inanimate objects to be gods. The moon, with its brilliant silvery light, inspired man to bow before it rather than try to conquer it. Holding the moon to be sacred was a major obstacle to even thinking of conquering it.

Then, for the first time, in the seventh century, the supremacy of nature worship was brought to an end by the Islamic revolution. Nature worship was replaced by monotheism making it the dominant creed of the times. This revolution, initially brought about in Arabia, soon spread through Asia, Africa and Europe. In more recent times, it has crossed the Atlantic to gain a foothold in America.

In the Muslim world this revolution was brought about through the influence of religion. The western world, with its own particular circumstances, developed this revolution along different lines, separating secular science from religion. The moon journey is an obvious illustration.

Just as nationalisation is an economic part of Marxist philosophy, modern science is a part of Islamic revolution which has been separated from its whole.

This is true of all natural sciences. They were forbidden territory because of the polytheistic view of the sanctity of nature's phenomena. Monotheism opened the doors of research and investigation by displacing nature from its sacred pedestal.

The history of science can no longer extol the achievements of just one nation, but shows science as a gift of the religion sent by God Almighty for the eternal guidance of all mankind.

Thus began a new era of freedom to investigate nature. The slow, thousand-year process culminated (towards the end at an ever-accelerating pace) in modern science and technology. Modern science is wholly the gift of the Islamic revolution—directly in its initial stages and indirectly in its later stages.

This truth has been generally acknowledged in one way or another. A number of books—*The Scientific Achievement of the Arabs*, *The Muslim Contribution to Civilization*, testify to its general acceptance.

Scholars agree that modern industrial progress owes its existence to Arab-Muslim influences. A. Humboldt writes: "It is the Arabs who should be regarded as the real founders of physics."

Philip Hitti writes in his book, *History of the Arabs* (1970): "No people in the Middle Ages contributed to human progress so much as did the Arabians and the Arabic speaking peoples."

Historians generally accept that it was the science which reached Europe through the Arabs (who were of course Muslims) which finally brought about the renaissance (or the first awakening, to be more precise). Original works in Arabic written after the establishment of *Bait al Hikmah* in Baghdad in 832 CE, were translated into Latin. "This stream was diverted into Europe by the Arabs in Spain and Sicily which helped create the European Renaissance," writes Professor Hitti.

What brought about this thinking in the Arabs in the first place, considering that they had been submerged in the same backwardness as the rest of the world of that time? There can be only one answer: the creed of monotheism. The Arabs, after the advent of Islam, were imbued with the spirit of monotheism, while others practiced polytheism. This difference caused the divergence in their histories, one shaped by the course of events, the other shaping history itself.

Henri Pirenne acknowledged this as a historical fact: "Islam changed the face of the globe. The traditional order of history was overthrown."

There is no doubt that the scientific revolution was set in motion by the Arab Muslims. But the initial stimulus came from the new way of thinking which had been made possible by Islam. Logically, the history of science can no longer extol the achievements of just one nation, but shows science as a gift of the religion sent by God Almighty for the eternal guidance of mankind. □



Law of Nature

Man can exercise his freedom but he cannot change the course of nature.

Dutifulness

A rights-based ideology is focused upon what has to come from others, whereas a duty-based ideology starts with the self.

BEARING FRUIT

A Matter of Planning

THE business of planting an orchard does not begin with the holding of an orchard conference. No, indeed, it begins by obtaining seedlings and providing every single one with such favourable conditions as will enable it to develop its potential and grow into a fully developed tree. When one has done this with innumerable seedlings, one can then expect to have an orchard.

In this respect, a nation is somewhat like an orchard. Build the individual and you build the nation. If hidden potential is to be developed, it takes education, encouragement and the provision of a proper environment

***Build the individual
and you build
the nation.***

at an individual level very early on in the whole process, just as a sapling must be put into well prepared ground and given the right type and quantity of nutrients, water, sunlight, etc. If people are properly instructed, while they are still young and receptive and by people who adopt a caring, positive attitude, they develop a healthy awareness of what their commitments to society should be and what

it means to be part of a nation. If callow youths are to be turned into real men, they have to have the feeling inculcated in them that to achieve positive ends they must continually keep up a peaceful and ameliorative struggle, one which will solve and not create problems for their fellow men.

Although we must accept the fact that this is a highly competitive world, there is nothing to prevent us from endeavoring to cooperate with and encourage cooperation from others. If we stand shoulder to shoulder with our fellow men in the face of the most heartless rivalries, there is no obstacle that we cannot overcome, no peril that we cannot face. But if we do not see to it that such ideas are propagated and accepted among people in their formative years, we cannot expect to find many who will be willing to cooperate. No matter how basically good the fruit trees in our orchard are, they will not blossom and bear fruit unless they are consistently well tended. □



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.



ON PACIFISM

PACIFISM is a doctrine subscribed to by those who find war and its attendant evils abhorrent—violence, destruction, loss of life and in particular, the disruption of normal existence. From the earliest times, peace has been a subject of compelling interest and study for all thinking people. Right from Aristotle to St. Augustine, from Bertrand Russell to Mahatma Gandhi, great minds have been pre-occupied with this subject and have advocated adherence to the ways of peace. 1937 even saw the publication of an Encyclopaedia of Pacifism, yet a generally acceptable formula for establishing peace has still to be developed.

The basic question is: Peace for what? or What is the criterion of peace? Pacifists generally maintain that peace must include social justice, or that peace is what gives justice to all. The Constitution of the International Labour Organisation, affirms 'Universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice.' This concept of peace has won general acceptance among scholars.

The law of nature says that peace can be attained only on a unilateral and not on a bilateral basis.

However, peace in this sense has never been established throughout history, that is, peace with social justice. History provides empirical proof that this definition of peace is not in accordance with the law of nature. And it is a fact that, one cannot achieve anything without adhering to natural laws.

Failure to establish peace is because almost all the scholars have bracketed one word peace along with certain irrelevant factors. Their concept of real peace is one in which there is no injustice, inequality and violence of any kind.

Let us take the analogy of the soil giving us foodstuff without which we cannot exist. In order to derive food from the soil, according to the law of nature, we have to first acquire fertile land and then prepare it for the cultivation of crops. The same is true of peace. Peace is like 'social soil', by cultivating which we can receive the fruits of social justice. Just as it is not possible to derive food directly from the soil, similarly we cannot derive social justice directly from peace.

The law of nature maintains that peace can be attained only on a unilateral and not on a bilateral basis. This means that first of all we have to abandon confrontational methods such as political activism, protest-based activism and human rights activism. This kind of unilateralism will establish normalcy, which will lead to peace and peace will open the door to all kinds of opportunities. By wise planning we can achieve the desired goals of social justice and human rights.

Peace for the sake of social justice is not a practicable formula. The only workable formula is peace for the sake of normalcy.

Since peace can be attained only on a unilateral basis, this may be called a 'peace strategy'. A historic example is the Hudaibiya Treaty entered into by the Prophet of Islam in 628 AD. This entailed the Prophet having to agree to all of the conditions demanded by his opponents. Such concessions may have seemed demeaning to his compatriots at the time, but the main feature of the treaty was that it guaranteed a lengthy period in which no war could be waged.

In essence, it amounted to a ten-year no-war pact, which gave the Prophet and his Companions ample opportunities to spread the message of Islam far and wide. This great success story serves as a model to develop a successful strategy for achieving the desired goal.

Peace can only be established on a unilateral basis without confrontation. To establish social justice and human rights, it becomes a bilateral issue. We have to fight other groups which we think are responsible for injustice and the violation of human rights. If we start our journey towards this goal, it is bound to lead to confrontation with existing groups. Instead of reaching the desired goal, people will

become engaged in violence. We have to evolve a method that will work without confrontation. The achievement of social justice or human rights calls for wise planning. It is not a journey along a highway, but through thickets of thorny bushes.

Peace for the sake of social justice is not a practicable formula. The only workable formula is peace for the sake of normalcy. Normalcy gives us the opportunity to plan wisely. Wise planning is non-controversial in nature. It can be done without confronting others, regardless of the section of the society to which they belong. The formula is: Establish a peaceful atmosphere at any cost, it will open up opportunities and availing these through wise planning, we can achieve success. □



Wisdom

A wise man always differentiates between a positive response and a negative reaction, between a realistic approach and an emotional approach.

An advertisement for 'Spirit of Islam Online'. On the left, a laptop is shown with its screen displaying the title 'THE GREATER JIHAD' and some text. To the right of the laptop, the text reads: 'NOW ACCESS SPIRIT OF ISLAM ONLINE'. Below this text is a hand cursor icon pointing at the word 'ONLINE', followed by an '@' symbol and the website address 'www.spiritofislam.co.in'.

THE GREATER JIHAD

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THE ADVICE OF A WISE MAN

Treasure to Seek

THE thirty first chapter of the Quran is named after Luqman. He was not a Prophet, but a wise man. He lived before the advent of Islam, having been born possibly in ancient Sudan. His advice to his son, in part is as follows:

O my son! Though it be but the weight of a grain of mustard seed and though it be hidden in a rock, or in the heavens or on the earth, God will bring it forth...Say your prayers, and enjoin good, and forbid evil, and endure patiently whatever may befall you. Surely this is something which requires firm resolve. Do not avert your face from people out of haughtiness and do not walk with pride on the earth: for behold, God does not love arrogant and boastful people. Walk modestly and lower your voice, for the ugliest of all voices is the braying of the ass. (31: 16-19)

The advice can be summarised thus:

God is all-knowing: God knows everything, hidden and open. This belief inculcates a strong sense of accountability in every individual. It motivates everyone to adopt a disciplined life and follow the guidance of the Creator, in the belief that if he fails he will be punished by God.

Prayer: Prayer is not a set of rituals, it is a way of acknowledging God's greatness. This acknowledgement makes one realistic, honest and differentiates man from the animal. An animal cannot demonstrate a sense of gratitude but man does have this special gift.

Enjoin good and forbid evil: It is everyone's duty to be watchful of others and tell them about good and bad behaviour. It is an expression of well-wishing towards others. An honest person cannot be an indifferent member of society.

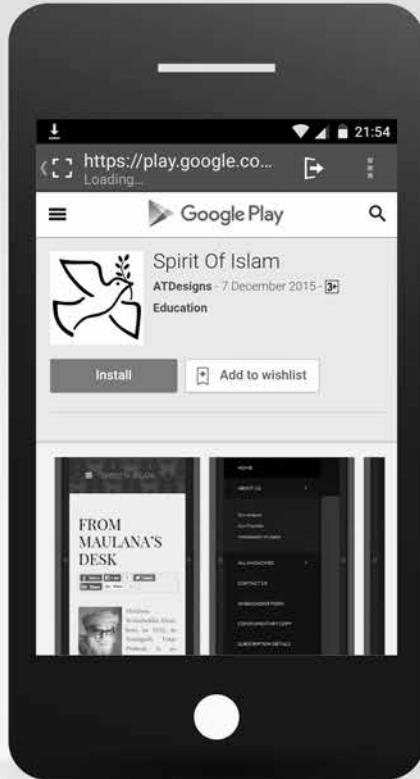
Patience: is a vital quality for sailing through the sometimes rough phases of life.

Determination: Without determination one cannot unflinchingly follow the path of truth.

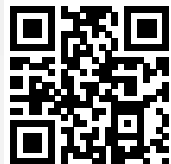
Arrogance: The greatest failing in an individual is arrogance and modesty is a source of strength. □

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

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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 realise 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



THE GREATEST TEACHER—DEATH

JULIUS CAESAR on passing by a statue of Alexander the Great in Spain, paused to gaze at it. Moved to tears, he said, "In the whole of my life I have not been able to achieve even one tenth of the feats performed by Alexander in the space of a single decade."

Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), son of the Greek King Philip II, conquered the greater part of the known world of his time in a mere ten years. Taking up a project entertained by his father, Alexander decided to attack the huge Persian Empire, marched in 334 BC into Asia Minor and quickly subjugated the cities in that region. He then conquered with comparative ease Phoenicia and Syria, and although he met with serious resistance at Tyre, he overcame this with the help of a fleet and the city was destroyed. Next he went to Egypt, which submitted to him without a struggle. To this day the city of Alexandria, which he founded exists as a monument to his victory in Egypt. Setting out on a further career of victory, he passed through Syria into Persia (now Iran) and marched up the valley of the Tigris through Mesopotamia (now Iraq). He captured Susa, Persepolis, Ecbatana and other Persian cities with their treasures and advanced as far as the Caspian Sea. The barbarian tribes dwelling on the coast of this sea were promptly brought under

his rule. Alexander did not tolerate opposition, always pursuing a policy of nipping it in the bud. The new empire was organised, into provinces, each keeping its own traditions and institutions. About this time he crushed a rising led by Bessus, the successor of Darius. He next entered India, crossing the Indus near Attock and winning a great victory. After some further conquests, he returned through Baluchistan to Persepolis, then set himself to organise the great empire he had conquered.

Alexander was a great administrator as well as a great soldier, and spread the influence of Greece throughout the empire he had won. But what did fate have in store for him? In the midst of this tremendous task and while planning a fresh expedition into Arabia, he died in the ancient city of Babylon—as defenceless in the face of death as any poor man in his miserable hut. Although he started out on a career of conquest that has few if any parallels in world history, his life was too short for his empire to be welded together.

And with his only son born after his death, none of his acquisitions could be retained by his heirs. His vast empire was then divided up between three military officers, none of whom was in any way related to him. There being no unifying force to hold it together, it was not long before his hard-won empire had disintegrated.

***Death strikes all,
sparing neither the
high nor the low.
Yet people who
are not directly
affected sadly fail
to understand its
significance.***

When death comes, it impresses upon the immediate beholders just how helpless man is before his Maker. Death strikes all, sparing neither the high nor the low. Yet people who are not directly affected sadly fail to understand its significance. It has a lesson to teach, but man ignores it. And if he has paid no heed to the most urgent realities of life, death will certainly leave him no respite to cogitate upon them at that time. It will be too late for him to learn lessons which he should have learnt long before.

Death is the greatest teacher, but man lives out his life as if there were no such thing awaiting him which will end his life's journey. □



DOWRY AND DOWER

An Un-Islamic Practice

DOWRY—a practice which has never been sanctioned by Islam—is greatly on the increase among the Muslims of India and Pakistan. The custom of dowry has its origin in the Hindu tradition. Hindus did not give their daughters any share in the family property. Instead, they were given dowries on the occasion of their marriage, as a measure of compensation, in the form of household utilities.

By following this practice, Muslims are denying their daughters their rightful share in the family property to which they are entitled under Islamic law. The practice of “compensating” for this by giving them wedding presents and labelling these “dowry” or *Jahez* is, in reality, a deliberate evasion of the Islamic law of inheritance.

Some Muslims consider dowry as the *sunnah* (way) of the Prophet, because he himself gave his daughter, Fatimah, a “dowry” on the occasion of her marriage.

FATIMAH'S DOWRY

As a justification for giving dowry, this proposition is clearly unacceptable. Early records show that the “dowry” which the Prophet gave to Fatimah consisted of only the barest of household necessities.

There is a saying of the Prophet that “the most blessed marriage is one in which the marriage partners place the least burden on each other”.

According to Ali ibn Abi Talib, the 'Prophet Muhammad prepared for Fatimah a sheet, a leather bag for carrying water, and a pillow filled with grass'. It is mentioned that when Fatimah left for Ali's house, it was quite unfurnished except for a flooring of sand, a pillow of date palm bark, a pot of water and a drinking vessel. Even the sheet which Fatimah was given had to be divided in two so that one half could be spread for sleeping on and the other half could be worn. Such a dowry would

be considered unbecoming to most people today.

It had never been the custom to give presents to the bride. The Prophet's feeling of obligation can be traced to the special relationship between Ali and himself. The Prophet had requested Ali's father, Abu Talib, to confide young Ali to his care. From childhood, Ali had been under the

Prophet's guardianship. They had become more like father and son. It was natural that on the occasion of his marriage, the Prophet, as his guardian, should give him some necessary items with which to set up his home.

DOMESTIC NECESSITIES

Jahhaza, as used in the traditions meant the 'furnishing of provisions'. The current trend is to give the girl an ample dowry at the time of her marriage, to set up her new home with ease. But this is a wholly un-Islamic concept and has no bearing on the ideals of marriage. Had it been a traditional Islamic practice, precedents would have been set in the Prophet's lifetime. The Prophet gave household items to Fatimah, largely on account of his close relationship with Ali, and gave nothing at all to his other three daughters on the occasion of their marriages. Had dowry-giving been an established way of the Prophet, he would surely have given it to his other daughters as well.

THE REAL GIFT

One regrettable aspect of dowry-giving in recent times is the ostentation that goes with it. Nothing could be more un-Islamic. Even the practice of a simple marriage if followed by a lavish dowry is contrary to Islamic practice. It was certainly not the *sunnah* of the Prophet. Fatimah was his favorite daughter, but he neither gave her a lavish dowry nor did he send things to her home after the wedding. Even when Fatimah made a request to him for something of a material nature, he only gave her the benefit of his counsel.

Presently the Islamic spirit has almost vanished from the responsibilities of arranging and performing a marriage.

Despite these faithful recordings, still many seek to justify giving huge dowries by citing the Prophet's gifts to Fatimah. But, would anyone of these people advise a daughter with blistered hands to forget about having a servant and praise God instead? Would anyone of them, on hearing of her difficulties with her in-laws, advise her to turn to God? By any standard of consistency, that is exactly what they ought to do.

If anyone were to allege that Islam was an imperfect religion that failed to lay down guidelines for every eventuality, all Muslims would be up in arms. But, in practice, Muslims themselves tacitly assert this, whenever they follow such un-Islamic practices.

DOWER (MAHR)

At the time of marriage, the groom gives the bride a sum of money *mahr* (dower) as a token of his willingness to accept responsibility of bearing all necessary expenses of his wife. This is the original meaning of *mahr*.

There are two ways of presenting *mahr* to the bride. One is to hand it over at the time of the marriage, in which case it is known as *mahr mu'ajjal*, or promptly given dower. (The word *mu'ajjal* is derived from '*ajilah*, meaning 'without delay'.) During the time of the Prophet and his Companions, to give promptly was the accepted practice and the amount fixed was generally quite minimal.

The Islamic law favours immediate handing over of dower.

Another way of giving dower, according to the Islamic law is to give it, after a certain period of time. This has to be settled at the time of the marriage. This form of dower is called *mahr mu'ajjal*, or dower given after a period of time. This has often been willfully misinterpreted as implying an indefinite postponement of the giving of dower.

The above mentioned dower, however, can take the form of some service performed by the husband. When Moses left Egypt for Madyan, he married Safoora, the daughter of the Prophet Shuayb. His dower was settled and paid off by binding himself to the service of his elderly father-in-law for a period of ten years. Only after performing this service for a full ten years did he leave Madyan for Egypt.

THE OPINION OF JURISTS

The Islamic law favours immediate handing over of dower. This was the practice followed by all of the Prophet's Companions. Deferred dower is an alternative, but is not equal to prompt discharging of this responsibility. It is a concession made to those who are unable to meet the requirements at the time of marriage.

NO HEAVY BURDEN

The dower, in cash or kind, has to be fixed keeping the bridegroom's position in life. It should be affordable to him, be it a lump sum in cash or some article of value. The jurists have different views to offer on what the minimum amount should be, but all agree that it should be substantial enough for something to be bought against it. There are no

traditions which encourage increase in the dower, whereas some argue for fixing smaller dowers. In all such cases, Islam lays down guidelines rather than issuing strict commandments. It is left to the circumstances of the groom. There is a well known saying of the Prophet Muhammad, that “the best woman is one whose dower is the easiest to pay”.

Another saying refers to such a bride as “the most blessed woman”. “The state of blessedness”, according to a third saying, resides in “her being easy to deal with and the acceptance of dower according to the capacity of the husband”.

The second Caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab, while addressing a gathering asked them to refrain from fixing heavy dowers in marriage. Hearing this, a woman, addressed the Caliph quoting the Quran, “If you have given much wealth to your women do not take anything from it”. (4: 20) In response Umar withdrew his words, saying, “The woman is right, Umar is wrong”.

THE COMPANIONS AND THEIR MARRIAGES

In the first era of Islam, marriage was a simple affair without pomp or ostentation. Expenditure being minimal, it did not burden either family. There is a saying of the Prophet that “the most blessed marriage is one in which the marriage partners place the least burden on each other”. The simplicity of marriage in the Prophet’s days is well illustrated by Abdur Rahman ibn Auf, one of the Prophet’s foremost Companions. He married in Madinah with as little ceremony as possible, not even thinking it necessary to invite the Prophet or the Companions. Imam Ahmad narrates how the Prophet came to know of this. Abdur Rahman ibn Auf came to the Prophet with the scent of saffron upon him. When the Prophet asked him about this, he said, “I have married”. The Prophet then enquired as to how much dower he had given his bride. “Gold equal in weight to one date stone”, he replied.

The most blessed marriage is one in which the marriage partners place the least burden on each other.
-Prophet Muhammad

A WRONG CUSTOM

Presently the Islamic spirit has almost vanished from the responsibilities of arranging and performing a marriage. Muslims nowadays prefer to follow local custom rather than the guidelines of Islam. A misguided practice is the fixing of heavy dowers—by the brides’ families and considering this as safeguarding the girls’ interests. *The Dictionary of Islam* says:

The custom of fixing heavy dowers, generally beyond the husband's means, especially in India, seems to be based upon the intention of checking the husband from ill-treating his wife, and, above all, from his marrying another woman, as also from wrongfully or causelessly divorcing the former. For in the case of divorce the woman can demand the full payment of the dower.

Fixing a substantial dower rests on the supposition that it has to be fixed at the time of marriage, but not handed over on that occasion. This gives it a "deterrent" value, not otherwise possible, i.e. if it was immediately paid.

SURE SOLUTION

What parents try to achieve—unsuccessfully—through the fixing of heavy dowers, is stability in their daughters' marriages. Such stability comes out of the girl's appreciation of the realities of life than from manipulation of the dower, or other material considerations. A keen awareness of the root cause of familial and societal problems is essential. The commonest manifestation of these are quarrels with in-laws, and sometimes even the breaking up of the home.

Stability in marriage comes from the appreciation of the realities of life rather than from manipulation of the dower, or other material considerations.

The bride comes from her parent's home where she has had unstinted affection. This relationship and the place in the family are usually taken for granted. She is unaware that these valuable elements in family living are not hers for the taking when she enters her new home as a married woman. They have to be earned. She has to show herself deserving of the kind of love and regard she had as a matter of right in her parents' home. This lack of awareness is often the cause of major rifts in her married life.

There is unconditional love in case of blood relationships. She is loved by her parents whether she is good or bad, active or idle, helpful or not regardless of the circumstances of her life and how her own character develops. With no such blood relationship with her in-laws, love from them will never be unconditional. It will be in direct relation to the impression her character and abilities make upon them in daily living. For the bride, entering the marriage bond is like undergoing a series of tests, the outcome of which will determine whether her married life will be stable and happy. Wise parents will warn their daughters to mould themselves to new sets of circumstances.

A woman, who enters marriage with a correct appreciation of what is required of her, will make the transition with ease. By virtue of her character and accomplishments, she will earn the same honourable position in her in-law's home as she had in her parents' home. For a woman who enters marriage, uninstructed as to the realities of life in her parents-in-law's home, friction is likely to arise because she does not consider it her own home. As a result her parents-in-law will not think of her as their own. Her life will have little sense of fulfillment. She will be fortunate indeed if her afflictions are only psychological. It is regrettable that women in this position seldom realise that their woes stem largely from their unpreparedness for the married state. Such a situation is invariably aggravated when her parents attempt to intervene. In a clash between the weak and the strong, it is always the former who suffer and of course, within the bonds of marriage, it is always the woman, who is in the weaker position. Parents do not realise the damage they do to their own daughter's life in waging an unending war against her in-laws. But, as the old saying goes, "Every father is a fool where his children are concerned".

It is the one who is prepared to look at the hard facts of life in the face, who will make their marriage a resounding success.

The parents-in-law's home is a kind of training and testing ground in which she must be willing to learn, to adapt and to prove her mettle. She must leave behind her the fairy tale existence of her parent's home. It is the girl who is prepared to look at the hard facts of life in the face, who will make her marriage a resounding success. □



Contented Life

Contentment in this world is only for those who willingly accept the Creation Plan of God.

WHEN ONE IS BROKEN INTO TWO

Never Ending Possibilities

WHEN an inanimate object, such as a piece of wood, is broken in two, it remains broken. Never again can it remould itself into one piece. Animate objects, however, live on even after breakages. When one live amoeba is cut in two, it turns into two live amoebae.

This is surely a sign from God, showing us the wealth of opportunity that God has kept in store for us live human beings in this world. For a human being, no defeat is final, no disaster permanently crippling.

No defeat is final, no disaster permanently crippling. As an animate being, no human can be finally shattered for, when broken, its every piece is welded again to a new live being if anything more formidable than before.

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For a human being, failure is not failure at all, for it only serves to make one into a more profound, thoughtful person. Obstacles present no hindrance, for they open up new avenues of intellectual advance. Setbacks do not stunt one's growth, for even if one is crushed into many small pieces, each piece in its own right has the capacity to form the building blocks of an entirely new being.

Such are the never-ending possibilities which God has created for man in this world, but

it is only one who is alive to these possibilities who can benefit from them, gathering and marshalling his resources after some shattering set back. When he tastes defeat, he does not lose heart, but prepares himself to issue a new challenge. He builds his new shipwrecked boat, and aboard it, sets out once again on his voyage through life. □



Selflessness

Heat and sunlight are supplied free to all living beings. The same service is required of man. Man must adopt the principle of selfless service.

HUMAN VALUES IN ISLAM

Guidance of God

GOD, who created the human being and put him on the earth, endowed him with inborn, or innate knowledge and values. These innate values form a natural moral sense, which makes a person recognise what is good and beautiful such as telling the truth, keeping promises and being grateful. This same moral sense also makes a person recognise what is bad and morally ugly such as telling lies, deceit and arrogance.

The natural moral sense is one way in which the Creator has provided for the guidance of human beings. He has granted human beings a conscience, which registers right and wrong and a mind which has the ability to reason. He has made the whole universe a natural book full of signs that lead a thinking person to the existence of God, His power and His bounty.

However to make matters clearer and to give man a more detailed knowledge of God, He showed him a well specified way of relating to Him. This was done through prophets. Prophets were persons specially chosen by God to bring to the people practical guidance on how to stay on the right path. The last of the prophets was the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad. The Quran was revealed to him as sure and clear guidance for all. Muhammad's explanations of the revealed verses and his life itself offered further and more detailed clarification of how we are supposed to act in a way that is pleasing to God. As God abhors all that is not beautiful and untrue, His guidance served to develop in the believers a very sound system of human values based on the inborn human understanding of what is good and what is evil, given to man by God at the time of creation.

The inherent moral sense in a human being allows him to recognise what is true and good from what is false and evil.

"I was sent to perfect the best in moral characteristics", said the Prophet describing his mission. While this points to the fact that the message he brought was not a new one, it also shows that the main purpose of the message was to make man live according to the highest moral standard which he is capable of. This saying of the Prophet may be linked to many verses in the Quran such as: By the soul and how He formed it, 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: 7-10).

We know that creation is amazingly vast and intricate. Man too is a very intricate being who has been placed on earth to lead a life according to the moral values laid down by God. Only in abiding by them will he pass the trial on earth and attain the eternal life in the Hereafter.

The inherent moral sense in a human being allows him to recognise what is true and good from what is false and evil. Through the call of the prophets and the revelation he was also offered divine guidance as to how to differentiate between good and evil. Good may be defined as whatever is pleasing to God and therefore beneficial to man. Evil on the other hand, is whatever incurs the anger of God and is therefore, harmful to man. Although God created mankind in a state of natural goodness, He also created him with the capacity or power to do both good and evil. However, only by doing good can he pass the divine test and achieve eternal life.

To preserve the pure and sinless state in which man was born and to keep him on the path to God, one has to keep away from and ward off evil. This is why piety, which is repeatedly stressed in the Quran, is the

Islam's ethical code has its basis in the Quran and the life of the Prophet.

most important quality a person could develop in relation to good and evil. Piety means to be conscious of God and to be careful of not overstepping the limits set by Him. It is a defence against evil and temptation.

Therefore, when we speak of cultivating human values in Islam, we simply mean following the guidance of God. Doing things that are pleasing to Him is beneficial to us

as this leads to salvation and eternal life. The Quran does not merely ask people to do good, and refrain from evil. It specifies the ways to achieve these ends. From this one can see that each person has a duty to cultivate good and desirable qualities, which are part of his natural make-up. And he has a duty to strive against bad traits and habits.

Islam's ethical code has its basis in the Quran and the life of the Prophet. Some of the qualities that should be cultivated are truthfulness, honesty, reliability in fulfilling trusts, gentleness, politeness, courtesy, generosity, compassion and readiness to forgive, purity and decency, humility, patience and steadfastness, courage, thankfulness, dignity, honour, self-respect, good temper, perseverance, diligence and willingness to respect others.

And the Quran says:

Verily men and women who submit and men and women who believe, and men and women who are patient, and men and women who are truthful; and men and women who are humble before God; and men and women who give in charity, and men and women who fast and men and women who guard their chastity and men and women who remember God much—to them God has promised forgiveness and a great reward. (33: 35)

The best deeds are those done regularly even if they are small.

-Prophet Muhammad

But lying, dishonesty, deceit, untrustworthiness, hypocrisy, harshness, miserliness, enviousness, hatred, shamelessness, self-conceit, opportunism and laziness are among the traits of human character one should fight against.

In cultivating good qualities, it is important to remember the saying of the Prophet, that 'the best deeds are those done regularly, even if they are small'. This stresses the need to develop good habits, so that the practice of goodness becomes easy and natural and a matter of course. □



Forgiveness

While forgiveness ends the problem, retaliation only increases and creates new problems which are difficult to be solved.

INFORMAL EDUCATION

Role of a Good Home

PEOPLE often enquire about the role of education in the promotion of moral values. To understand this one needs to differentiate between formal and informal education.

Formal education is basically meant for acquiring a job, with emphasis on the profession. A person preoccupied with developing or acquiring professional skills and knowledge will be completely job-oriented. Even if moral values are added to the syllabus, it will not have the desired impact.

Moral values are imperative for developing a better society. It makes one duty-conscious, develops a predictable character and helps imbibe social ethics. This is the task of informal education. The *Spirit of Islam* magazine is a part of this informal education. Informal education begins from home and covers all aspects of life. The means of this education can be varied—journalism, literature, intellectual exchange, meetings and libraries.

Moral values are imperative for developing a better society. It makes one duty-conscious, develops a predictable character and helps imbibe social ethics.

Just as formal education aims to impart quality education, the focus of informal education is to develop quality character in people, to give rise to simple living and high thinking, to help them realise the importance of peaceful behaviour, to make every individual live as a giver member of society and not merely as a taker and to engender civic sense.

Today formal education is part of people's economic lives. There is nothing wrong with this, but it should be accompanied by informal education. Youth should be trained for professional jobs within the campus, while, at

home and in institutions, they should be given informal education. This is the only way to make our society better.

Outside the campus, the student meets a variety of people and has varied experiences. These experiences serve as a teacher. With a well prepared mind, a student can benefit a great deal from such experiences. These two processes—formal and informal education—if, they work in parallel, will lead to a better family and society as well as better professional life for the student.

The Importance of Home in Imparting Informal Education

Schools or colleges are centres of formal education, while homes are the centres for informal education. Both are equally important. The former is essential in terms of securing jobs, the latter for building a better society.

Families sometimes ignore their responsibility of imparting informal education to its members. Failure to do this, will make the society pay a heavy price. It is important that every member is duty-conscious, if we are to build a better society. The best source for this is the home, a basic unit of society.

This verse in the Quran underlines the importance of home education: 'Bear in mind all that is recited in your homes of the revelations of God and of wisdom. God is all pervading and all aware.' (33: 34)

It tells us what should be the course of home schooling. Senior members of the house have to play the role of educators and ensure that there is an open environment for discussion at home. All issues should be discussed in an informal atmosphere. Such discussion will not have any particular pre-designed agenda, but revolve around the words of God, the wisdom of life, and evaluate everything on merit. Members must evolve into good advisers as well as good listeners.

Just as formal education aims to impart quality education, the focus of informal education is to develop quality character in people.

Ideally, family members must register their experiences during the day and share these experiences with others at the end of the day. This makes every home a centre of informal education, resulting in a better society and a better nation. □



Opening closed doors

For every closed door, there is always another which is open—but only to those who have the eyes to see it and the courage to march through it.

RIGHT THINKING

Sure Way to Success

AS human beings, we have the capacity to think at a purely intellectual level, conceptualise and discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad. The greatness of humanity lies in our ability to think and plan a course of action. Animals do not have this ability and hence cannot plan; their actions are governed by their natural instincts.

As humans endowed with the ability to decide on a course of action (and cannot, in reality, do otherwise), it is necessary for everyone to fully awaken their senses and bend their mental faculties to the right way of thinking. Right thinking leads to right planning and right consequences.

THINK POSITIVE

Right living is an art. Those who have learnt the art can construct a successful life. Those oblivious to it have nothing but failure in store for them.

To think out of the box is to think differently, unconventionally, and from new perspectives.

Right living comes from 'positive thinking'. It is about keeping an open mind and rising above the psychology of reaction or retaliation to plan objectively based on rational conclusions. If positive thinking gives us the direction to use our intellectual capacity, negative thinking blocks its development. Negative thinkers plan under the influence of external situations, which may or may not be particularly good.

Humans are social beings and cannot live in isolation. We are all in one way or the other, indispensable to each other and negativity can never be beneficial. Success will come only to those who respond positively, even in negative situations.

DISCOVER, BY THINKING

All of our activities are governed by our minds. We first think, then act. Right thinking leads to making right beginnings, and right beginnings lead to right results. When an apple falls from a tree, it always falls straight down. People took this falling-down for granted. No one thought to question why.

Sir Isaac Newton was probably the first person to think about this phenomenon. Why did the apple fall to the ground? Unusual thoughts, but they helped Newton to conclude that the earth exerted a force on the apple. He proceeded to discover the laws of gravity.

In a similar way, for millennia, people believed that the earth was flat. This theory appeared to be true as far as anyone could see. Standing on the coast, if you watch the horizon for ships, you will initially see the masts and as they come closer, the entire ship becomes visible. The ship seems to have risen from below the horizon. Think about this phenomenon.

If the earth was flat, the entire ship would have appeared in the distance. The entire ship would have been visible as a speck on the horizon that got clearer as it came closer.

All discoveries are made solely by thinking; you don't stumble upon them. Think, and you will discover the answers to everything.

LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

One other principle of right thinking concerns our ability to control our minds. This enables us to derive lessons from the various incidents we experience.

Life is a series of experiences. If our eyes and ears are open and receptive, we can derive useful lessons, spare ourselves from mistakes and boost our intellectual development. These lessons enable us to construct our lives better.

Success will come only to those who respond positively, even in negative situations.

DISTINGUISH

An important feature of thinking is the ability to distinguish between things which seem to be similar, but on a deeper level, are radically different. Failure to understand the difference often results in great loss.

We are constantly faced with choices—between courses of action, opinions and ideas. It would be unwise to form opinions based on appearances. A clear analysis is needed before we form our opinions. A person who fails to comprehend this wisdom is like a driver who cannot differentiate between an empty street and a street full of traffic.

ADJUST

We are all born idealists. We constantly seek higher ideals, the highest

and best in all spheres. This approach sounds good in theory, but is destructive in the long run. The reason is that we do not live our lives alone. Individual interests, considerations and choices vary. Everyone has a personal, unique view of what is good, bad and ideal. This makes the achievement of personal ideals impossible. The only practical solution is to adopt the policy of adjustment with others.

IGNORE PROVOCATION

Conflicts and quarrels have been a feature of human society. That is not to say that there is no escape from these situations. It depends upon whether individuals entangle themselves in such conflicts or manage to keep themselves away. This holds true for individuals, as well as nations.

Most quarrels start with verbal exchanges that grow heated. People over-react and become hostile. Their retaliatory thinking often results in full-fledged enmity. Negative action is the result of negative thinking.

Differences should be countered in a positive manner. The best principle to follow on encountering an unpleasant situation is to think carefully before speaking, or acting. Verbal exchanges can snowball into more serious conflicts. If something poses a real threat and must be taken seriously, you should make every effort to solve the problem at hand, but confine yourself to resolving it by discussion.

Even if your feelings are hurt, there is no real harm, only imaginary. And reacting on imaginary grounds would not be wise. Exercise restraint, and ignore provocation.

*If we are provoked
by every unpleasant
experience, we
will fail to devote
ourselves to
worthwhile goals.*

THINK OUT OF THE BOX

To think out of the box is to think differently, unconventionally, and from new perspectives. You are not limited to thinking in terms of black and white. There are grey areas in between. Better options exist. And thinking out of the box will lead you to these better options.

For instance, if someone says something hurting to us, we tend to get angry and quarrel with the person. We feel that not reacting to the insult shows cowardice, while fighting back would be considered bravery. This is wrong thinking. There is a better option—the way of avoidance. Instead of wasting your time being provoked into fighting, you should stick to the path of positive action and avoid negativity. There is a saying that illustrates this better option—“Dogs may bark, but the elephant goes on”.

This is not just a matter of morality but an important part of life's reality. Each individual is unique and hence we are confronted with unpleasant experiences. If we are provoked by every unpleasant experience, we will fail to devote ourselves to worthwhile goals. Time and resources in this world are limited. We cannot afford to spend these precious things on 'teaching someone a lesson', or on retaliation, or other such negative actions. The price we pay for these futile engagements is our own progress and development.

BE ACCOUNTABLE

We are not machines controlled by a system, nor are we animals governed only by instincts. We enjoy freedom. We make decisions and take action of our own free will. How can we be sure we make the right decisions and take the right action?

History shows the ineffectiveness of all measures in this connection—social pressure, law enforcement or reformation. People cannot on their own bind themselves to moral values or adhere to justice. They need to be convinced that they are under a super-power—a living and powerful God who is perfect and just.

The concept of a living and powerful God is necessarily accompanied by the concept of accountability. God is just, and everyone is answerable to Him for their actions. This guarantees that we think right and do right. It gives us the conviction that we will receive God's eternal reward if we always think right and do right.

*In normal situations
the human brain
remains in a dormant
state. It is only
external shocks
which awaken it,
and the greater
they are the greater
the intellectual
revolution within
man.*

FINALLY

The truth of the matter is that it is our level of thinking which determines success or failure. Success is the result of right thinking. Think right, do right and succeed. □



HIGH ACHIEVERS

Adopt Simple Techniques

THE American writer, Charles Gafield, who has made a thorough, psychological study of peak achievement, says that 'in a study of 90 leaders in business, politics, sports and arts, many spoke of false starts but never of failure'. Disappointment spawns greater resolve, growth or change. Moreover, no matter how rough things get, superachievers always feel there are other avenues they can explore. They always have another idea to test.

The writer emphasizes the fact, however, that these high achievers are neither superhuman, charismatic nor even singularly talented. What they do have in common is an uncanny knack for increasing the odds in their favour through simple techniques that almost anyone can cultivate. He delineates five major areas of concern. First and foremost, one must have a great sense of mission and a strong desire to turn everything that comes one's way to good account. Secondly, one must be result oriented, so that one is not just preoccupied with unceasing activities, but with a definite outcome of one's efforts. Thirdly, one has to take stock of whatever knowledge and skills one has and bring out whatever is latent and waiting to be used, so that it can be tuned to a peak of perfection. Very often it is not so much a question of adding to one's knowledge and skills as of developing what are already there—capacities of which we are sometimes barely aware. Frequently, it is one's initial sense of mission which taps these hidden resources.

Sometimes it is impossible to achieve distant goals without the aid of one's fellowmen, in which case, one has to develop the capacity to inspire the team spirit in others. Particularly in highly competitive situations, it is essential to be able to encourage other competent people to make a significant contribution to one's own performance.

But no one sails through life without bumping into obstacles and suffering a variety of setbacks. This is when one must beware of lapsing into passivity. Then one has to take oneself firmly in hand and decide to look upon such things not as great gulfs from which one will never emerge, but simply as hurdles which have to be surmounted if one is to finish the race. One's initial feeling of disappointment should quickly transform itself into a great determination to try harder, to alter one's approach, to seek different and better ways of achieving one's goal and to channel one's energies more effectively towards their ultimate target. □

POLITICAL ISLAM & IT'S PROPONENTS

Root Cause of Terrorism

A TERRORIST is not created in his mother's womb. It takes an environment of hatred—a whole jungle of hatred—to bring him into existence. The present community of Muslims has unfortunately provided such an environment. How did this hatred grow? For one, it is the extensive proliferation of a particular ideology among Muslims—a political interpretation of Islam, that offered Muslims the status of God's vicegerants on earth, with the right to rule the world on His behalf.

Islam was the world's leading civilization in the period between the decline of ancient civilizations and the ascent of modern European ones. But ultimately, Western colonial powers established their dominance over the Muslim world. Political movements were launched in the name of Islam as a reaction to this domination. Their objective was to free Muslim countries from Western rule and to re-establish Muslim rule.

It was Syed Jamaluddin Afghani, born in Iran in 1838, who probably developed the concept of Islamic nationalism for the first time. During his lifetime, the colonial expansion of the West was at its peak and almost the entire Muslim world had, directly or indirectly, come under its rule. Jamaluddin Afghani made it his mission to bring down the colonial system and restore the political power of Muslim nations. Towards this end, he launched the movement known as Pan-Islamism. It aimed to bring together Muslims across the world to form a united international power, which would defeat Western nations and set the Muslim world free from their clutches.

If you read the Quran, nowhere in it will you find any mention of 'political Islam'. The Quran contains neither information nor injunctions which could lead to the setting up of a political system.

Jamaluddin Afghani may have failed to achieve his political target but he successfully sowed the seeds of hatred for Western nations in Muslim minds. Muslims in general came to regard Western nations as their enemies. Most Muslim leaders of his time thought in negative and political terms. Prominent of these were Sayyid Qutb and Amir Shakib Arsalan in the Arab world, Muhammad Iqbal and Sayyed Abul ala Maududi in the Indian subcontinent, and later Ayatullah Khomeini in Iran.

Initially, these movements focused on expulsion of Western forces from the Muslim world. More appropriately it was an initiative to gain political freedom. Thus in the times of Afghani, this movement was more political than religious, with its slogan being, "The East for Easterners".

The next phase of this revolutionary movement was given an ideological form. What had been described in communal terms (with reference to the global Muslim community), now took an Islamic hue. An attempt was made to Islamize their communal thinking by developing a complete ideology based on the political interpretation of Islam. If earlier the thinking had been that the Western nations were usurpers and that a restitution of Muslims' political rights must be demanded from them, the next phase developed the theory that the Islamic system covered all aspects of human life including politics. The Muslims were therefore, duty-bound to capture political power by force, so that Islam might be implemented as a total system. The promoters of this movement held that so long as Islam was not adopted by believers as a complete system, their faith would not be acceptable to God. It followed that bringing about a political revolution became a binding obligation, like prayers and fasting.

Giving a political interpretation to Islam is a despicable act and in no way serves the higher aims of the religion.

In this second phase, two Muslim leaders figured prominently, the Egyptian intellectual Sayyid Qutb (died 1966) and Syed Abul ala Maududi (died 1979), a Muslim ideologue from the Indian subcontinent. Both leaders found themselves in a very favourable environment—an environment that made it possible for their books to be translated into many languages and thus for their ideas to spread across the Muslim world. Muslims

across the globe were directly influenced by this political ideology. Some became actively involved while the others' thinking was shaped by this ideology. All dreamed of the political glory of Islam.

This movement, designed to establish political Islam, gave rise to various other movements. Two of these movements grew into prominence. *Al Ikhwan al-Muslimun*, or the Muslim Brotherhood, established in 1928 in the Arab world and the *Jamat-e-Islami* established in 1941 in the subcontinent. Both were highly organised movements and subsequently launched campaigns to establish Islamic rule in Muslim countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Algeria, Tunisia and Malaysia.

At first, these movements sought to establish Muslim rule by spreading their ideology of political Islam. When they failed in this they started taking part in the national elections in the countries where they were active. When they failed on this front too, they resorted to militancy.

What had started as a pro-Islam movement in the first half of the twentieth century had turned into a reactionary movement in the second half of the century. But events have demonstrated that in spite of making every conceivable effort, Muslims have failed in their campaign against others. On every front, they have had total defeat. It is the ensuing build up of a defeatist mentality which has culminated perforce in the phenomenon of terrorism in the name of Islam.

Though ostensibly aimed at re-establishing Islamic rule, these movements actually grew as a political reaction to the circumstances in which Muslims found themselves. Its inspiration and its impact were totally negative. The movement was the result of anti-western rather than pro-Islam feelings, and for precisely this reason it rapidly turned violent.

A truly Islamic movement arises out of feelings of benevolence for all of humanity, its goal being neither land nor power and is always carried out through peaceful means. It never adopts violence. If Muslim movements opted for extremism, it was because they were not genuinely Islamic in nature. The truth is that these Muslim social movements, which had only the community agenda in mind, adopted the name of Islam purely as a means of self-justification.

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The eighteenth century French thinker Rousseau, who was greatly concerned with the human condition, wrote a treatise called *The Social Contract* (1762). He opened his book with this arresting statement: 'Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains'.

This is the language of a political book, a book which was to contribute to the ideas and policies of the leaders of the French Revolution and which ultimately gained worldwide currency. But if you read the Quran,

it begins not with a diatribe against human inequality with its implied criticism of wrong governance but with simple praises of God. And it ends with the necessity to seek refuge in God against Satan. The Quran and the *Hadith* have no mention of the system of state. Nor is there any mention of revolt against any existing system. Neither is there any indication as to how a political ruler or *khalifah* is to be appointed or selected. No such principles are set forth in Islam, neither from an ideological nor from a practical point of view. In short, it is clear that no aspect of politics in Islam is dealt with anywhere in the Quran and the *Hadith (sayings and deeds of the Prophet of Islam)*.

At more than one place in the Quran we are told what the Prophet's tasks were in accordance with the divine plan. These were conveying the divine message to mankind, purification of the soul and imparting wisdom to live a successful life. In none of the verses are we told that the task of the Prophet was to establish Islamic rule in the world. The champions of political Islam have distorted such verses in support of their cause to serve their own ends. Giving a political interpretation to Islam is a despicable act and in no way serves the higher aims of the religion. □



Save your minutes

If you can save your minutes, your hours will of themselves be saved. Taking care of the parts is just as good as taking care of the whole. This is because the whole is made up of parts.

SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

Conscious Efforts Necessary

THE coming together of a man and a woman in marriage is the most unique event in the universe. All the things created in the universe are in pairs. But the compatibility that exists between a man and a woman cannot be found in any other creation. When a man and a woman come together as life partners, it is evident that they have been made for one another through a conscious plan.

The relationship between a husband and wife, while unique, is also a delicate matter due to the fact that they are not related by blood. In a blood relationship, there is an emotional bonding and establishes relationship by force of nature. On the other hand, a relationship in marriage has to be developed through conscious effort and rational management.

In this journey the first important step is to realise that the partnership of man and woman in marriage is unique and part of a conscious plan. This realisation will instill a sense of gratitude at having found each other. They will consider marriage as a blessing. A heart full of gratitude will have no negative feelings for one's partner.

From birth, we go through a continuous process of development. In this process, intellectual development is of utmost importance. Two people who are married to each other are immediate intellectual partners to each other. Marriage offers an ideal opportunity to commune, ensuring continuity in their learning.

The three important aspects of gratitude, importance of considering marriage as intellectual partnership and de-conditioning form the foundation of a good home.

However, there is a pre-condition to be fulfilled for learning. It is to have the readiness and courage to break away from any wrong conditioning which has become a part of one's personality due to upbringing and lifestyle. We are conditioned by the environment we grow up in. The environment both within the home and outside moulds us into what we eventually grow up to be. This gives us the idea that our way of thinking is right, the result of our conditioning. Everyone goes through this. In marriage this becomes a problem. The woman looks at things from a different angle than that of the man, leading to disagreements which can blow out of proportion. The solution is to de-condition by engaging

in discussion with an open mind. Both partners in this process should be ready to admit their mistakes and change their attitude.

The above three aspects of gratitude, considering marriage as intellectual partnership and de-conditioning, form the foundation of a good home.

The art of life management requires understanding of oneself (knowing one's own capabilities and nature), and becoming aware of others' nature and the world one lives in. This will help one to plan life in a realistic manner and make improvements as and when required.

Policy of Wait and Watch: In a marriage, a couple often makes the mistake of expecting the other to come up to their expectations from day one. They ignore the need to give time to each other to adjust, knowing well that nothing happens before its stipulated time. It is not possible to find today what you are not destined to find until tomorrow.

Mutual trust develops when both partners undertake introspection to diagnose their weaknesses and correct them.

Mutual Trust: Mutual trust between a couple is essential to successfully build a home. The reason for lack of trust is a lack of total commitment to each other in the relationship despite being married. Lack of commitment becomes a psychological barrier. Mutual trust develops when both undertake introspection to diagnose their weaknesses and correct them.

Treating trivial matters as trivial: Sometimes trivial matters escalate into serious discord. This happens due to lack of maturity and a poor sense of proportion to evaluate and understand the seriousness of an issue. Oversensitivity and over-reacting to even petty matters causes friction. Looking at an issue calmly and evaluating it in the backdrop of the big picture of life will make good sense prevail.

The formula of 30 seconds: Men are egoistic by nature and women emotional. This can make them come to loggerheads with each other due to their differences. This difference cannot be obliterated. It makes sense for the woman to keep her calm when a man's ego flares up, and likewise when the woman gets emotional and loses her cool the man must stay calm. The law of nature on negative feelings is that it gets activated for only about 30 seconds, and if left unchecked, it gets defused. If a person controls his anger and does not allow it to flare, negative feelings will ebb away leaving no negative outcomes.

Happiness is a state of mind: Most people think they deserve more than what they have. Discontented, they spend their lives searching for an ideal partner who can live up to their imagination and in this quest for the ideal, they live unhappy lives. Happiness is a state of mind. It does not exist outside of it. Only you can make yourself happy. No one can gift happiness to you. □



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PEACE: THE GREATEST GOOD

The Summum Bonum

LITERALLY meaning the greatest good, *summum bonum* is an end in itself. What, in practice, is the *summum bonum*? Most people hold that freedom is the greatest good, but freedom cannot be so described. *Summum bonum* refers to the maximum use of something which does not have any negative results, while the unchecked use of freedom can result in anarchy. Anarchy creates unmanageable problems and is bound to jeopardize development both material and spiritual.



The truth is that the *summum bonum* is peace, which is good in all situations. Whatever use we make of peace, it never has any negative effects. Peace brings normalcy, and all development and progress can take place only in a normal situation.

There are two kinds of peace: individual peace and social peace. Individual peace is peace of mind, of the utmost importance for an individual. This is an issue of self-management and only one who is able to do this can enjoy peace of mind. Bringing peace to society, on the other hand, is social management.

According to the law of nature, the role of peace is to provide the basis for all activities, which would pave the way for justice.

History shows that social management, in the ideal sense, is an elusive goal. Reformers who have worked for ideal societal peace have only seen their endeavours result in violence.

The reason is that these social activists have linked social peace with social justice on the assumption that there can be no social peace without social justice. They felt they had to establish social justice, and that social peace would naturally ensue. But this is

quite unnatural, and therefore not workable. According to the law of nature, the role of peace is to provide the basis for all activities, which would pave the way for justice. The basic role of peace is to establish normalcy, that being a prerequisite for success in anything. Peace has to be established at any cost.

Social peace is a bilateral issue. There being multiple groups in a society, it is a *sine qua non* that the terms be mutually acceptable. The

best principle for peace is to maintain *status quo*. The practical method would be—Idealism for individual peace and pragmatism for social peace. No other concept will work.

After the second World War, both Germany and Japan tried to re-develop their countries which had been devastated by war. For this purpose a peaceful environment was necessary. But there were problems. For example, Germany had lost the eastern part of its land. This was true also of Japan, which had lost its strategic island of Okinawa. But both accepted the *status quo*.

Without attempting to change the existing state of affairs, they began to execute their plan of re-constructing their countries by using the resources within their control. Both proved to be successful and achieved a high standard of development within a short period of time.

The practical method of social management is—Idealism for individual peace and pragmatism for social peace.

Accept the *status quo* and try to achieve your goal by peaceful planning. This is the way to achieve any goal, spiritual or material. Undoubtedly peace is the *summum bonum*, but to establish peace, the law of nature must be followed. Peace provides the basis for performing all activities and is not the result of these activities.

Peace is like the soil. Without the soil there can be no plants. Similarly, without peace there can be no social development. □



A Life of Purpose

Human pursuits fall into two categories: worthy and unworthy. A worthy pursuit is one which leads to positive results and an unworthy pursuit is one which leads to no result at all.

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 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**

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Alif Lam Mim. The Romans have been defeated in a nearby land. They will reverse their defeat with a victory within a few years: [for] with God rests all power of decision, first and last. On that day the believers too will have cause to rejoice, with the help of God. He helps whom He pleases: He is the Mighty, and the Merciful. (30: 1-5)

Two great empires—the Christian Roman Empire and the Zoroastrian Persian Empire thrived when Islam emerged. There were constant clashes between these two. Iran (Persia) attacked the Roman Empire in 603 AD, taking advantage of certain weaknesses in the latter. The Romans suffered severe defeat and by 616 AD, a large part of the Roman Empire, including Jerusalem, had been captured by the Iranians. The Prophet received the prophethood in the year 610 AD, and began his task of explaining the oneness of God in Makkah. This led to the struggle between monotheism and polytheism. The Quran predicted that within ten years, the Romans would regain supremacy over the Iranians. Roman historians say that immediately thereafter the vanquished Roman King, Heraclius, underwent a mysterious change, that in 623 AD, he led a retaliatory attack on Iran. By 627 AD, he recovered all his occupied territories from the Iranians. This proved that the Quran was a revelation from God. None except God could have made such accurate predictions about the future. These events indicate that victory or defeat are in the hands of God. The downfall of a nation and the rise of another, to all appearances, seem to be ordinary events, but appearances have a deeper significance.

Every event is caused by the angels of God, invisible to ordinary human eyes. There is a similar invisible aspect of the present, outward world and it is the world of the Hereafter.

[This is] God's promise. Never does God fail to fulfil His promise—but most people do not know this; they go by the outward appearance of life in this world, and are neglectful of the Hereafter.

Do they not ponder about their own selves? God has created the heavens and the earth and all that is between for a purpose and for an appointed time? Yet many deny they will ever meet with their Lord. Have they not travelled through the land and seen what end their predecessors met? They were mightier: they cultivated the earth more and built more upon it than these have ever built. Their own messengers also came to them with clear signs: God did not wrong them; they wronged themselves.

Then the end of those who committed evil was evil, for they belied the signs of God, and they derided them. (30: 6-10)

Constant remembrance (through prayer, etc.) and deep contemplation lead a man towards finding God. It is by profound thought that a man finds God. In the present world, God has scattered His signs all across the human environment, in the surrounding universe and also in the teachings of the Prophet. Those who give serious consideration to these signs of God will find God.

When a rightful argument is presented and is ignored it is equivalent to ignoring God Himself. For such people there is only eternal deprivation.

God originates the creation, and shall repeat it, then to Him you shall be returned. On the Day the Hour arrives, the guilty will be struck dumb with despair, and have no intercessors among those partners they ascribed to God. They will deny these partners. When the Last Hour dawns—on that Day they will be sorted out: those who believed and did good deeds will rejoice in a Garden, and as for those who denied the truth and belied Our signs and the meeting in the Hereafter—they shall be brought to the torment. So glorify God in the evening and in the morning—and praise be to Him in the heavens and on the earth—and glorify Him in the late afternoon, and at midday. (30: 11-18)

The existence of a perfect and complete world is definite proof of the First Creation. If the first creation was possible, why should the second not be possible? If one accepts the present world, but does not accept the Hereafter, it amounts to denying a natural corollary of a fact which one has accepted .

'The guilty' refers to the influential people who led the campaign against Truth, and who provided arguments in support of the denial of Truth. When Doomsday dislocates the system of the world, the guilty will suddenly realise that the supports, of which they had been proud, were without foundation. The words which supplied uncontradictable arguments in favour of their stand, will prove false. Witnessing contrary conditions to their expectations will shatter their illusions, leaving them dumbfounded.

On the Day of Judgement, human beings will be divided into two groups—those who glorify God and offer praises to Him and those who do quite the reverse. The people of the first group realise God to the extent that He becomes the sole topic of their conversation. A definite manifestation of this glorification of God is the prayers offered five times a day. In this verse, the offering of praises 'in the morning' means the *fajr* prayer. The prayers of *maghrib* and *isha* are included in the words 'in the evening'. Prayer at midday is called *zuhr*, while the late afternoon prayer is called *asr*. □



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ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's Interview on Peace & Terrorism with ANI Journalist in Agra, October 13, 2013

Namastey! Salam! I want a few words of blessing from you.

Namastey! I pray for everyone—that they make themselves good and that they work for the betterment of the country.

I'm very fortunate to interview a person like you. You have been working for peace and against terrorism for a long time. Terrorism has become a major problem for the country. Since it is such an immense problem, how do you think it can be solved? Don't we need many more efforts than at present?

My mission is not crowd-based. It is individual-based. I address the individual. We seek to help them transform their minds, their thinking. Across the world, many individuals have changed themselves through the efforts of this mission. They've abandoned negative thinking and have taken to positive thinking—even in countries that have earned a bad name for themselves, like Pakistan.

You have received many national and international awards. This must have given you great joy.

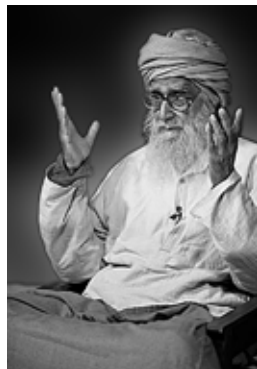
I feel joyful when I see an individual being transformed for the better. When someone tells me that he has abandoned hatred and left negativity and violence, I feel very happy.

I don't get happiness from awards. People just give them to me and I accept them.

If you don't get happiness from getting awards, at least they might act as an incentive for you to carry on with your work, is it not?

No. I never talk or think about the awards, not even with any of my companions. I don't remember which awards I have got. My work is my mission. Giving or not giving awards may be other people's work.

I consider human beings as important. If someone reads something that I have written, or listens and changes into a positive thinker, I regard myself as successful, and this gives me much joy. Almost everyone lives



in negativity, in hate, in tension. And so, when someone says that he has given all this up, I am truly happy.

Many people have been transformed by your work. But still so much remains to be done.

There will always be something that remains to be done. One has to accept this as a reality. People who join our mission and become committed to it continue to face challenges, but they try to respond to them positively, through positive thinking.

If you expect to be happy only when all your problems have been solved once and for all, you will never be happy. So accept the fact that there will always be issues, that there will always be challenges. Try to avoid getting into negativity. This will help you to be happy.

You have been trying to counter terrorism and promote peace. But terrorism still remains a problem in India, including Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in Kashmir. What do you have to say about this?

In Kashmir, internal terrorism has almost ended. Terrorists active in Kashmir are those who have infiltrated from across the border.

Our mission's work in Kashmir has made a major impact in changing the minds of many Kashmiris, in helping them realise the futility of violence and the value of peace.

There are many followers of your mission in Pakistan. What do you want to tell the people of Pakistan?

In Pakistan, there are many people who read our literature. Some of them sometimes call me on the phone or listen to my programmes hosted on the internet. They tell me how this mission has helped them abandon negativity.

So, at the level of individuals, there are many Pakistanis who have been transformed with the help of this mission. As far as relations between India and Pakistan are concerned, these are issues that concern the governments of the two countries, and that's a different matter. We are doing our part in spreading the message of love.

You have received many awards for promoting peace and inter-community harmony. Despite this, inter-communal hatred and violence show no sign of abating in India. Is your message not reaching people?

I see the matter differently. If you compare the India of 1947 with

the India of today, there's a big difference. In 1947 and the years that followed immediately after, there were deadly communal riots in India. And these happened regularly. Today, far fewer riots happen, and these are mainly during or just before elections, for political purposes, after which they quickly die out.

So, I would say that communalism has declined. It means that people like us who are working for peace and harmony have not failed.

What often happens is that a clash happens in one locality of a town and some sections of the media project it as India being rocked with riots. Now, I don't blame the media, because it is an industry that is based on 'hot news'. But I do say that one should not form an opinion about things simply on the basis of what the media might say about it. I don't condemn the media. I read the media, but I use my intelligence to form an opinion about anything.

The socio-economic conditions of Muslims in India is quite dismal. What do you think should be done to address this issue?

Any community—Muslims or Hindus or any other—must progress through its own efforts. No one else can do anything for it. No one can gift you progress from outside. You have to progress through your own initiative.

There's so much violence in India today. It's increasing by the day. The country's name is getting tarnished. What do you have to say about this?

Violence was always there. It was there in the past. But at that time, there was no mass media, and so news about violence in one place did not travel to other places, and so people elsewhere did not know about it. So, it's not something new. □



Self-discipline

Self-discipline, in setting bounds to one's freedom, helps one to manage one's desires and checks one from going astray.

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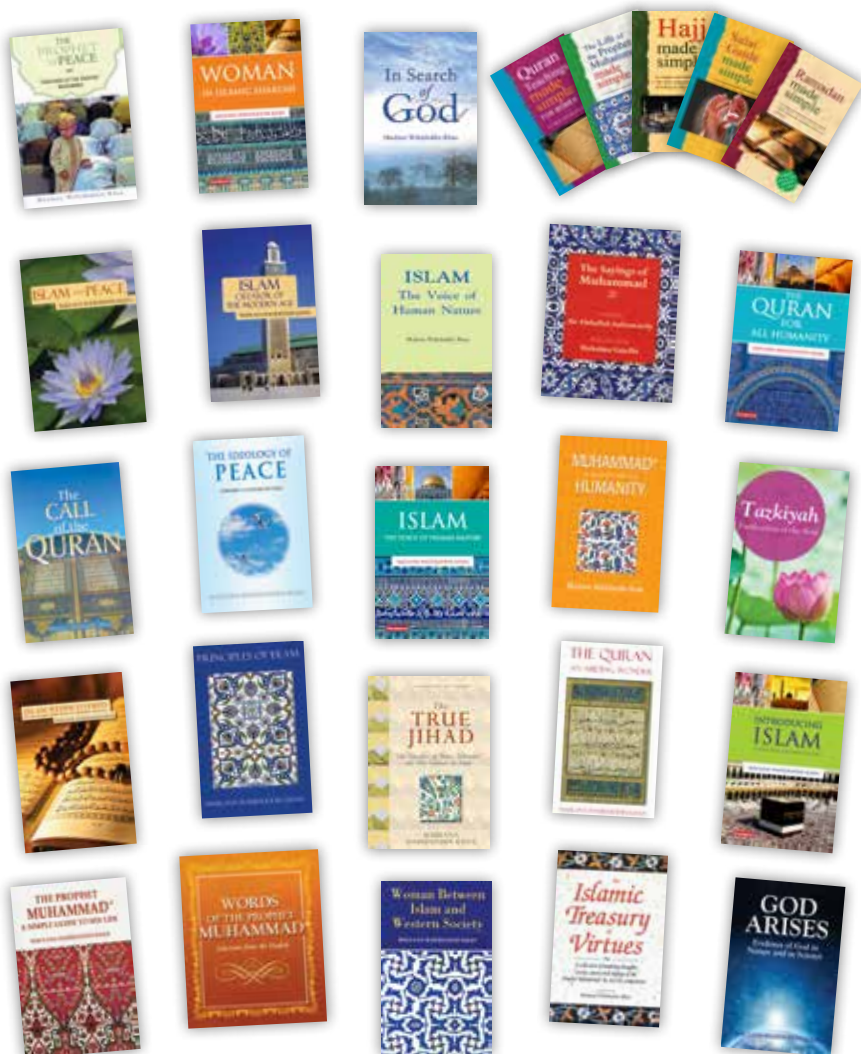
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002, HM Wimberly,
6, Berlie Street Cross,
Langford Town,
Bengaluru - 560 025 +91 8050202626
subscription@thespiritofislam.org
www.spiritofislam.co.in

Bank transfer: 'Centre for Peace'

SB account No.: 01360 1000016325,
Indian Overseas Bank, Bengaluru,
IFS Code - IOBA00 00136

Spiritual Writings of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



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Printed, published & owned by

Fathima Sarah, 002, HM Wimberly, 6 Berlie Street Cross, Langford Town, Bengaluru - 560025
Printed at Cosmos Printers and Publishers, 450, 3rd Cross, Wilson Garden, Bengaluru - 560027