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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

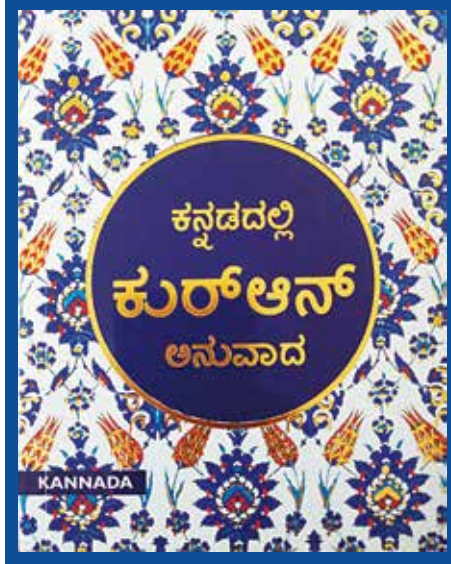
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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

ISSUE 63 MARCH 2018

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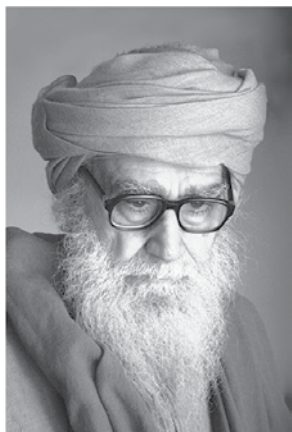
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, born in 1925, in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, is an Islamic spiritual scholar who is well-versed in both classical Islamic learning and modern disciplines. The mission of his life has been the establishment of worldwide peace. He has received the Padma Bhushan, the Demiurgus Peace International Award and Sayyidina Imam Al Hassan Peace award for promoting peace in Muslim societies. He has been called 'Islam's spiritual ambassador to the world' and is recognized as one of its most influential Muslims¹. His books have been translated into sixteen languages and are part of university curricula in six countries. He is the founder of the Centre for Peace and Spirituality based in New Delhi.

GOOD NEWS FROM MUZAFFARNAGAR

HERE we reproduce a news report which has been published in various newspapers. The text presented below has been published in *The Times of India*, dated February 17, 2018:

Muzaffarnagar: Muslims agree to remove mosque for bridge construction

The long-pending construction work of an overbridge in Muzaffarnagar city could now see the light of the day after members from the Muslim community gave their consent to remove a roadside mosque affecting the project.

The project had remained stalled for the past 10 years with the religious structure playing as a major hindrance. However, the locals held a meeting and decided to remove the mosque for the betterment of the area and smooth flow of traffic. The district administration had made adequate security arrangements to deal with any eventualities considering the sensitivity of the

1. The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims 2018, Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Jordan.

issue. However, the demolition drive was conducted under peaceful atmosphere and no untoward incident was reported from the spot.

It is commonly believed that the construction of a mosque is an eternal construction—once built, the mosque cannot be relocated. But it must be clarified that the shifting of a mosque from one location to another (relocation) is not a taboo. It is in line with Islamic teachings.

This injunction about mosque-building was established in the later period of Islam, during the Abbasid era (750–1258 AD). The Quran and the teachings of the Prophet do not have any injunction about the sanctity of the location of a mosque.

During the Abbasid period, some jurists gave a *fatwa* (juristic sanction) that once a mosque is built at a location, it cannot be shifted from there. But this *fatwa* was not unanimously accepted by all jurists and clerics; only a handful subscribed to this idea.

Present-day Muslim clerics called the above *fatwa* an *ijtihadi* (creative reinterpretation) issue, that is one dealing with the personal opinion of a scholar and which could be altered if need arises. In other words, if required, a mosque could be relocated from its original position and this would be completely permissible in Islam. The *Hanbali* School of Jurisprudence endorses this principle as is alluded to in the book of Ibn *Qadama*, a *Hanbali* scholar (1147-1123 AD):

If there arises a need, the ground part of a mosque could be made into a well (*saqaya*) or a shop and this is Islamic; even demolishing a mosque to make a well or a shop is permissible in Islam. In lieu, the mosque should be re-built at a different location (*Al-Mughni, Ibn Qudama*).

Another principle of jurisprudence is *talfiq*—this means using the *fatwa* (injunction) of a school of jurisprudence and applying it to other schools of jurisprudence. This principle could be used in the case of mosque relocation because although the *Hanafi* School does not allow for relocation of a mosque, the *Hanbali* School does allow it.

In Islam the issue of mosque-building is on the basis of need, not only on the basis of sacredness. In the modern world, when the era of city planning came about, in Muslim cities for example, Makkah and Madinah, old mosques were relocated in large numbers. This was done because these old structures served as obstacles in the task of

city planning. For example, if the Bilal Mosque was built at a certain place, then relocating it involved removing it from its original place and building another mosque with the same name at a different location. At the original location of this mosque, a new construction would come up under the city plan.

A mosque is undoubtedly a respectful place. But if need arises, the location of a mosque could be used for another purpose or to cater to a requirement, and doing so would be completely Islamic.□

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

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Failure in one field is
no reason to lose
hope: there is
always another field
awaiting one,
in which the flower
of one's destiny can
flourish and thrive.

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

FROM THE EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Dr. Farida Khanam has been a professor at the Department of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi. A Study of World's Major Religions, A simple guide to Sufism are two of the books amongst many others, of which she is the author. She has also translated many books on Islam authored by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. Currently, the chairperson of Centre for Peace and Spirituality (CPS International), an organization founded by her father Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, she is a regular contributor of articles to journals, newspapers and magazines. Dr. Khanam has edited Maulana's English translation of the Quran and has also translated his Urdu commentary of the Quran into English. Under Maulana Wahiduddin Khan Peace Foundation, along with the CPS team, she is designing a series of courses on peace-building, countering extremism and conflict resolution.

WOMEN IN ISLAM

REFERRING to men and women, verse 195 of chapter 3 of the Quran says, "You are members one of another". Further to this a man and a woman are considered as 'two halves of a whole'. Another important fact is that the whole of the human race comes from Adam and Eve. Two other verses of the Quran say: "Glory be to God, who created in pairs all things that the earth produces." (36: 36). "O Humanity! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female." (49: 13).

According to the Quran there is no difference between a man and woman. They share a common fate, and are subject to the same existential conditions with the same potential and the same purpose of being.

Islam is often seen as keeping women in subservience. But Islam holds women in high esteem; they enjoyed a special status during the lifetime of the Prophet. During the initial days of Islam, the Prophet's wife Khadija was herself a business-woman. Moreover, it was her initiative that led to their marriage. Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, helped in giving first aid to the wounded in battle and Asma, Abu Bakr's daughter, used to look after camels and date-orchards. But, if a woman chose to lead a domestic life, taking care of her family, she had every right to do so. Thus it can be said that women had the right to express themselves, and take their own decisions in life.

So women are not required just to stay at home and confine themselves to household tasks. They can also seek work outside their homes, as long as there is no harm to their modesty and they do not compromise on their values.

WOMEN AND EDUCATION

A study of the life of the Prophet tells us that education is just as essential for women as it is for men. From the Islamic point of view, the goal of education is to create awareness in the individual. There is a famous saying of the Prophet that the acquisition of knowledge is the duty of all Muslims. And scholars who have studied the teachings and life of the Prophet have inferred that the acquisition of knowledge is also the duty of every Muslim woman.

In the biographies of the narrators of *Hadith* (sayings and deeds of Prophet of Islam) literature, mention is made of the academic services of women, which shows that during the first era of Islam, there was a strong tendency among women to acquire knowledge. Imam Bukhari who compiled the *Hadith* book *Al-Jami as-Sahih*, which is considered as the most authentic source of *Hadith*, was initially educated at home by his mother and sister.

There are some reports that tell us that the Prophet's conversations with his wife Aisha were aimed at educating her. Aisha reported that the Prophet would often get up in the middle of the night and then converse with her on various topics. This informal education was an important part of their life together. These interactions and discourses made her the most distinguished personality in matters of religious knowledge. The Prophet also took her with him during many travels which gave her more knowledge in his company. She survived the Prophet for a full 50 years, and throughout this period, she remained a valuable source of Islamic knowledge. Her house served as a school of religious learning.

Women are just as entitled to seek education as men. However, this does not necessarily mean that an educated woman should be rebellious and headstrong, challenging the authority of whomsoever she likes. Education in the real sense makes a person see reason, and gives an insight into all aspects of life.

According to the Quran there is no difference between a man and woman.

They share a common fate, and are subject to the same existential conditions with the same potential and the same purpose of being.

WOMEN AND MODESTY

The Quran enjoins modesty in dress for both men and women such as will maintain one's dignity and respect irrespective of gender. The Quran tells the Prophet to clothe his wives and daughters and the daughters of the believers in a modest and respectable manner, so as not to attract undesirable elements. This means a woman should, by her attire, indicate that she is well-bred, respectable and modest. It also means that a believing woman, out on the street, or at work, should not draw attention to herself, but should, of her own free will, lead a modest life.

One of the teachings of the Prophet is, "Every religion has a characteristic and the characteristic of Islam is modesty".

The Quran also says "O children of Adam! We have sent down to you clothes to cover your nakedness, and to be pleasing to the eye; but the raiment of righteousness in the best." (7: 26). According to this verse to dress properly as well as to do good is the truly Islamic way of life. The Quran further calls upon women and men to lower their gazes. One of the teachings of the Prophet is, "Every religion has a characteristic and the characteristic of Islam is modesty".

WOMEN AND WORK

As stated earlier, the Prophet's wife Khadija was a successful business-woman, and the Prophet himself was employed by her. His later wives Umme Salmah and Zaynab, also earned their own money. The Quran does not prohibit a woman from working outside her home, or engaging in business. What is more important is her virtue and how she conducts herself.

OBLIGATIONS OF A WOMAN

A woman and a man are both obliged to believe in the oneness of God, without which there is no salvation. Women are also required to say the obligatory prayers and keep the fasts. A woman who is sufficiently capable and talented may earn her livelihood outside the home. Islam attaches particular importance to morality and exhorts both men and women to be morally responsible to each other, and most importantly to God.

THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN

For the first time in the human history, women were given their due legal rights, thanks to Islam, which specifies that property must be divided among the rightful heirs which included women.

A woman can possess a property separately, and neither her father nor her husband can exercise any right over it. On this subject, a retired Chief Justice of the Delhi Court, Mr. Rajinder Sachar had this to say: "Historically, Islam had been very liberal and progressive in granting rights to women. Islam had granted these rights to Muslim women over 1400 years ago."

Entitling women to have a share in property, contrary to the custom of the time, is a clear proof that Islam had no desire to degrade them. A woman also has the right to demand maintenance and the court can ask her father or her husband for a contractual sum. And at the time of marriage, a woman is entitled to *mehr* or dower, which should be solely in her name, not her father's. The *mehr* or dower is in no way a payment for conjugal rights. It is in fact a token sum of money, which symbolizes in material form, the man's responsibilities towards his wife till his last breath.

A woman is also free to give or refuse her consent to marriage. No one can force her to marry against her will. At the time of the marriage she is required to give her consent, failing which the marriage would be invalid. Marriage according to Islam, is a bilateral contract, based on the free consent of the two contracting parties. The Prophet of Islam said, "An unmarried girl should not be married until her permission has been taken".

Thus, we can see that Islam as it is accords respect and equality to women. To sum up we can best say that in the matter of gender equality the maxim of Islam is "Equal in respect, different in role". □

Dr. Farida Khanam

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Hard Work

*Hard work is the brightest jewel in
the crown of human virtues.*

ABOUT THE QURAN

Creation Plan of God

IF you read the Quran, you will find that it deals with all of the subjects relating to human beings. But the basic theme of the Quran is the creation plan of God. All other subjects touched on by the Quran are related to this basic theme, directly or indirectly. God Almighty created the universe, and it is God Almighty who revealed this book called Quran. The primary purpose of the Quran is to reveal that divine plan according to which the world was created and people were settled in it.

This theme, which is central to the Quran, is thus described in chapter 67 *Al-Mulk* (The Kingdom): “He created death and life so that He might test you, and find out which of you is best in conduct”. (67: 2)

Spirituality according to the Quran is living in the world and trying to derive spiritual food from material things as a matter of intellectual discipline. It means to control rather than kill one's desires.

The word ‘life’ represents pre-death period and the word ‘death’ represents the second period, which may be called the post-death period. The pre-death period is very short, about a hundred years, while the post-death period has no such limit. It will continue for all eternity.

According to the Quran, God Almighty created an ideal world that is called Paradise. The present world—the planet earth—has all those things that man needs or desires. But, in this world everything is imperfect in its form. In Paradise, on the other hand, everything will be perfect and ideal. Paradise will be free

of every kind of limitation or disadvantage. Moreover, Paradise is an eternal world. Paradise has a beginning but it has no end.

God Almighty created man and woman, bestowed them with freedom of choice and then settled them on planet earth. Through His prophets, God Almighty gave guidance to humanity. In every age the prophets guided the people of all races about right and wrong.

It was simply a matter of guidance; there was no compulsion for people to follow it. People were asked to develop their thinking in such a way as to bring about moral consciousness in themselves and to lead a good life by their own choice. In this sense, everyone is being tested. Then God Almighty established a system of complete recording. This

recording system is managed by the angels. It is so comprehensive that it can record the intentions, the speech, the behaviour and the dealings of every single person. This system is operative at all times, day and night. The purpose of all these arrangements is to select the kind of men and women who deserve to gain entry into eternal Paradise. At the time of Doomsday, God will appear with His angels and according to the angelic record He will select those men and women who passed the test.

What are those qualities that are required for a person to be a deserving candidate for Paradise? In a single word, it is spirituality. Paradise is a spiritual world and only those men and women who have developed spiritual qualities in their personality will be blessed with entry into Paradise.

According to the Quranic description. "Paradise is the home of peace" (10:25). Paradise is a place where there is no nuisance, no noise, free of all kinds of pollution. The inhabitants of Paradise will be positive thinkers in the complete sense of the phrase. The environment of Paradise will be free of all kinds of negative states, like anger, malice, hate, revenge, wrong desires, jealousy, fighting, exploitation and dishonesty, for these negative factors cannot be part of the psychology of the spiritual inhabitants of Paradise.

Paradise is a place where there is no nuisance, no noise, free of all kinds of pollution. The inhabitants of Paradise will be positive thinkers in the complete sense of the phrase.

The definition of spirituality given in the dictionary is—the state of being opposed to worldliness. This definition is partly true, for not being driven by worldliness is not just for the sake of not being worldly; it is for the sake of a higher goal.

There are two kinds of spirituality—one is to renounce the material world completely which constitutes going into seclusion. This kind of spirituality has no creative role as such. It suppresses all the natural qualities of a human being, who then dies without having made full use of his natural potential.

Quranic spirituality is spirituality of the other kind. It means living in the world and trying to derive spiritual food from material things as a matter of intellectual discipline. It means to control rather than kill one's desires.

The fact is that God Almighty has created man with great potential. It is not good to suppress this potential. One should rather avail of this potential for the sake of personality development. Our personality develops if we face the challenges posed by the society.

The above spirituality can be termed as creative spirituality. For example, there is a verse in the Quran which says with reference to the believers that “they forgive people when they are angry” (3: 134). It means that spirituality is based on the formula of anger management rather than on trying to become a person who has no feelings of anger. The principle for such spirituality can be summarized thus; turn your negative sentiment into positive response; make friends out of opponents.

Further, being spiritual should make one live a simple life and follow high ideals. Simple living and high thinking are complementary to each other. Simple living saves one from all kinds of distractions and high thinking saves one from being the victim of negative experiences. Simple living and high thinking are a *sine qua non* of the spiritual culture.

Spirituality is mentioned as being of sublime character (68: 4). Sublime character is that character which is based on high thinking. If one reads the Quran, one will find that it lays great emphasis on *sabr* (39: 10), *sulh* (4: 128), forgiveness (42: 40), avoidance (7: 199). Though these teachings apparently seem to advocate passivity they are not so, for they embody great wisdom.

The Quran tries to build that kind of mind which is able to manage all the affairs of life on the basis of spirituality. It is not passivity that is advocated but skill in the proper management of life’s problems. The purpose of this formula—indeed, it is the Quran’s greatest concern—is to concentrate on high goals and one who wants to achieve high goals has no option but to foster the aforementioned qualities. He has to try to effectively manage all undesirable situations. Otherwise, he will become preoccupied by trivial issues and will fail to continue his journey towards higher goals.

In the chapter *Al-Shams* (The Sun) of the Quran, you will find these verses: “He who purifies it will indeed be successful, and he who corrupts it is sure to fail” (91: 9-10). These Quranic verses refer to the importance of personality development, laying emphasis not on its physical, but on its spiritual aspects. It is no exaggeration to say that this is the main theme of the Quran, personality development being its basic goal.

What is purification of the soul? It is to purify one's mind of all kinds of bias and negativity. In other words, it is to de-condition the wrong conditioning. This is the mind the Quran tries to build. One who fails in this de-conditioning process will become a corrupt or an unwanted personality in the divine scheme of things.

Man's personality is like an onion. An onion has a central core, but this core is covered by many layers. If you want to reach the core, you have to remove all these covers or layers. The same is true of the human being. A human personality is always subject to the process of conditioning, which wraps it up in many layers.

The process of conditioning begins right from birth. Initially, it is an unconscious process. The individual's family, his institutions, his society, and his community; all are sources of this conditioning. From childhood up to adolescence, he is affected by this conditioning. Only after reaching adulthood does he become able to understand this problem consciously.

From here onwards begins what is called personality development. It calls for an awakening of the mind and a conscious discovery of this problem. At this stage, the individual must develop the capacity for anti-self thinking. He must engage in introspection. He must try to de-condition his previous conditioning with complete objectivity. This is the most important task for every person.

What is de-conditioning? It is a process of sorting out the items you have stored in your mind, all of which you must view with complete objectivity, so that you overhaul your personality in a dispassionate manner. You have to remove the negative thoughts from your mind, if you are to turn your negativity into positivity.

A man asked the Prophet of Islam a question—a very comprehensive one. He said, "O Prophet, give me a master piece of advice by which I may be able to manage all the affairs of my life". The Prophet replied: "Don't be angry". (*Sahih Bukhari*)

The above teaching is a call to purify oneself from reaction. One should not allow anger to become a part of one's personality. It is only in this way that one can truly develop one's personality.

Simple living and high thinking are complementary to each other. Simple living saves one from all kinds of distractions and high thinking saves one from being the victim of negative experiences.

To sum up, we can say that just as every book has its objective, the objective of the Quran is to make man aware of the creation plan of God. The main themes of the Quran are enlightenment, closeness to God, peace and spirituality. It is a book which brings glad tidings to mankind along with divine admonition and stresses the importance of man's discovery of truth on both spiritual and intellectual planes. □



SUICIDE

An Islamic Perspective

ONE of the websites gives the following information about the most common reasons for suicide. *A sense of burden—Would my loved ones be better off without me?; a sense of emotional pain—There is so much suffering in my life; escaping negative feelings—Is death the answer to ending this pain?; altered social world—Is death the answer to my troublesome social relationships?; and hopelessness—Is there evidence that life is going to get any better?*

Suicide is held illegal in all religions and legal systems of the world. There is a teaching of the Prophet of Islam according to which one who committed suicide would have to face eternal Hell. A Companion of the Prophet narrated the following incident:

“We were accompanying the Prophet in a *ghazwa* (battle). Along with us was person named Quzman who had already embraced the faith. During the battle he suffered a serious injury. People began to praise him before the Prophet for the bravery he had exhibited. But the Prophet said “He is surely one of the people of Hell”. The Companions were taken aback by the Prophet’s words, so he asked them to go and investigate the matter. It was then learnt that Quzman had indeed been severely injured during the battle and when he could not bear the pain any longer, he killed himself with his own weapon (Quzman’s case was that of suicide). When the Prophet was told about this, he uttered these words: “God is great and I bear witness that I am His messenger”.

Discovery of God and conviction that He is the All-powerful and that He has a plan for us will remove all kinds of hopelessness from us. In this vast universe, it is God who is man's support.

After knowing what Islam has to say about committing suicide, it is very important to understand that if one were to prevent people from committing such an act one should have an alternative to present to them; a rational explanation to pain, emotional distress, helplessness, failure, and a hope for the better world, so that they can face the challenge and not think of ending their life as a solution.

The creation plan provided by Islam gives an explanation to why we face these challenges in this world. In the Quran God says:

We shall certainly test you with fear and hunger, and loss of property, lives, and crops. Give good news to those who endure with fortitude. (2: 155)

We are born into this world. We spend our short lives here. The journey of our life in this world passes through different and varied experiences. Because of these experiences, consciously or otherwise people begin to think that this present world is for us the real world. Any loss or failure or problems in this world to such a person will appear as final and fatal.

Islam preaches that this world is an examination ground where we are being tested for our eligibility for God's perfect world of Paradise, where there is no failure, loss, sorrow or evil; in fact it is a perfect and eternal world which we all long for. God commands us to face the challenges of this world with courage and patience. The role of patience in the examination of life is that it keeps us steadfast under any and every circumstance. It prevents us from deviating from the right path and going astray. We will find creative solutions to the problems and not hide from them. We will not opt for either negativity or extreme steps of ending our precious life.

The role of patience in the examination of life, is that it keeps us steadfast under any and every circumstance. It prevents us from deviating from the right path and going astray. We will find creative solutions to the problems and not hide from them.

Discovery of God and conviction that He is the All-powerful and that He has a plan for us will remove all kinds of hopelessness from us. In this vast universe, it is God who is man's support. It is He alone who can help us cross this river of life and lead us to the shore. Each one of us repeatedly goes through experiences that lead us to realize our severe limitations. Very often, we do not get what we want. Every now and then, situations arise in our lives that compel us to feel completely helpless. In addition to this fear of loss, sickness, accident, old age and death tell us that we are utterly dependent on a force that is infinitely greater than us, and that without the help of this infinitely superior power, we simply cannot face the challenges of life

successfully and will easily fall into despair and hopelessness.

Apart from the promise of the perfect world of Paradise, to those who endure with fortitude the difficulties of the life in this world, the Kind

and Merciful God has further promised to help us in many ways to face our life here.

The promise of God's forgiveness for those who repent will help a person make a new beginning, even after committing the biggest of mistakes. Power of resilience, presence of continuous opportunities, learning from mistakes and moving on with better plans, support from families and friends to cope with the situation, strength from prayer and supplication, qualities of determination to succeed after failure, to try and try again are all innate in human nature. All these are the support and comfort to those who want to overcome the hurdles in their journey of life.

The above factors should enable us to want to live every moment of our life fully, rather than giving us even for a moment, a thought for ending our life. □



KNOWING
WHAT TO SAY,
WHEN TO SPEAK
AND WHEN TO
REMAIN SILENT
IS ONE OF THE
GREATEST SOCIAL
VIRTUES.

MAJLANA W. KHAN

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF FAILURE

Dealing with Loss

A SENSE of failure is what generally makes people sad, depressed and hopeless. Here we highlight some of the reasons that make one negative and develop a sense of failure. Looked at from the bigger picture of life, these situations should not cause one to despair and can often lead one to greater success.

AFTER A MISTAKE

When one makes a mistake, there are two possible kinds of responses. The first response is to become regretful. One who is full of regret will become disheartened after every mistake becoming a victim of stress. It is also possible that one may lose courage and be unable to do anything else again. This is a negative aspect of making a mistake. But there is also a positive aspect of a mistake. That is, it encourages you to engage in introspection and self-reassessment. When you do this, your mistake will turn into a mistake-plus. A mistake-plus is bound to activate your mind. It will lead to brain storming emerging as a natural gift for you. It will increase your creativity and produce a thinking process that may lead to the capacity for a better re-appraisal of yourself and an increased ability to analyze things. A mistake becomes a mistake-plus when it awakens your mind. It thus enables you to re-plan your life.

OPPORTUNITIES ARE ALWAYS THERE

After losing the first chance, there still exists a possibility of achieving success. The law of nature is always with you. Our world is full of opportunities. When you fail to grasp the first one that comes your way, there is always a second one in the offing. Availing of it will prevent you from succumbing to frustration and will enable you to re-plan your life. Very soon you will discover that taking the second chance has probably brought better results than the first one could ever have done.

FROM FAILURE TO SUCCESS

Failure does not mean defeat. Failure can become a stepping stone to better things, provided you do not lose courage and subsequently re-plan the course of action. It is a law of nature that the scope for achievement will always be greater than the quantum of failure. No failure can stop you in your quest for success, provided you maintain your positivity. If your first plan fails, that, in a way is good news for you. For according to the law of nature, your experience of failure will

activate your mind. It will open up new windows that were hitherto closed. Your failure will spur you on to work in a more effective way and to attain a resounding success. Thus, initial failure can often be a blessing in disguise.

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

According to the law of nature, there is always a positive aspect of every negative experience. The only condition is that one should not become negative or succumb to despair. Life is full of unpleasant experiences. There is no escaping them. But negative experiences are not evil phenomena. They are in fact a blessing, a kind of intellectual challenge. In such situations, it is better to wait rather than opt for a reactive approach. If you save yourself from becoming the victim of negative experience and do just one thing, that is, let nature take its own course, it would serve as a positive factor for your mind. It will certainly increase your thinking capacity and unfold your intellectual treasure. The only fit response when you find yourself in a negative situation with others is to forget the unpleasant external experience and on your own, take a fresh decision to improve your ability. Very soon you will find that you have gained more than what you had lost.

EVERYTHING IS TEMPORARY

Every dark night is a temporary phase in this world and the same is true of human difficulties. Every human difficulty is temporary in nature. Every difficulty is bound to disappear after some time. It is a law of nature that no difficulty goes on forever. So, you have to feed this simple formula into your thinking, 'It is all but temporary'. Optimism should be the key word. Optimism means knowing that one will eventually be rescued; that the waiting period will only be temporary in nature. The only thing that can create a serious problem is for you to lose your patience or to lose hope or to forget that the situation is temporary.

When you save yourself from being upset, you are in a better position to keep your energy intact, to keep yourself from being a victim of frustration, for frustration is certainly a disastrous frame of mind to be in. At every point in life there are serious difficulties on the home front, the social front, the national front and the international front. The simple formula for facing these difficulties successfully is to think that, just like the human being, one's problems also are only for a limited period of time. Moreover, difficulty has a plus point. Difficulty unfolds your hidden qualities; it is a boon rather than an evil. In fact, difficulty is only a state of mind. It is the mind where difficulties are created and

where they can be killed too. So, in difficult situations, try to focus on your mind rather than on the difficulty. And very soon you will find that the difficulty has disappeared, first psychologically and then physically.



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UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

A Comprehensive Principle

ACCORDING to Islam, all human beings have been created by one and the same God, and therefore belong to one great brotherhood. So far as their earthly origin is concerned, they are all descendants of the first pair of human beings ever created by God—Adam and Eve. In their subsequent spread over different parts of the world, variations in geographical conditions produced a diversity of stature, skin colours, languages and other racial characteristics.

The teaching of Islam in this regard is that despite differences of colour, language, culture etc., people should harbour no ill-will towards those who are apparently unlike themselves, for differentiating between one man and another is not approved by God. They should rather promote fellow feeling towards others, even if at first glance they appear like total strangers to them. Bearing in mind that they are all traceable back to Adam and Eve, they should be each other's well-wishers and willingly come to one another's assistance, like members of the same large family.

Ideally, the relation between one man and another ought not to be one of strangeness but one of familiarity; not of distance but of nearness, not of hatred but of love.

When all human beings are descendants of the same progenitors, all are equal, no one is superior or inferior. And before God, certainly, all human beings are equal; all are equally His creatures and His servants. For God does not discriminate between one and the other of His creations.

The message of universality of brotherhood calls for one to adopt a comprehensive principle in one's dealings with others. It is the principle of treating others just as one would like to be treated by them. The Prophet observed, "No one can be a believer until and unless he begins to like for his brother what he likes for himself".

All individuals are sure about their likes and dislikes. Now what is required is that they simply follow the principle that whatever

The teaching of Islam with regard to universal brotherhood is that despite differences of colour, language, culture etc., people should harbour no ill-will towards those who are apparently unlike themselves, for differentiating between one man and another is not approved by God.

behaviour they want from others, they should themselves accord to others. Conversely, whatever behaviour towards themselves they abhor in others should likewise be eschewed by them.

This is such a comprehensive principle that it is useful in every kind of relationship. It is needed between individuals, men and women and nations as well. If people were to adhere to this principle, their family life as well as their social life would improve. National life as well as international life would run more smoothly. It is like a master key to human ethics; one single key which suffices to open all locked doors.

The Prophet said, "No one can be a believer until and unless he begins to like for his brother what he likes for himself".

One who does not differentiate between his own people and others is a man of principle. His is a contradiction free personality. And the trait, when properly developed, will turn him into a character par excellence. □



Man has an
innate need for
something to
depend upon,
something which
he can look up to.

K A L I D A S W I K R A D

INTENTIONS

Pure and Sincere

ISLAM attaches the utmost importance to intentions. No action is acceptable to God purely on the basis of outer appearance. God accepts only such actions as are performed with proper intention and rejects those performed with ill-intention. Right intention is the moral purposiveness which underlies all actions performed solely for God's pleasure. One who acts on such feelings will be rewarded by God in the Hereafter.

Ill-intention, on the other hand, is a negative spur to worldly attainment. Ostensibly religious acts, if performed for worldly gain or public commendation, are in this sense ill-intentioned. Any fame, honour or popularity which ensues from an ill-intentioned act is a hollow triumph and is looked upon by the Almighty with extreme disfavour.

Intention is rooted in man's inner thinking and feelings. A common man is unable to penetrate the inner recesses of a person's mind but God knows full well what a man's thought processes and feelings are. People can be deluded by appearances, but God has complete knowledge of everything. He will deal with people according to His knowledge and will reward everyone exactly as they deserve.

Intention has to do with inner reality. A thing which loses its reality or its meaningfulness is valueless. Similarly, an act which is performed with ill intention or with no good intention has no value either in the eyes of man, or of God.

Things are of value only when they are pure, without any adulteration. An act done with right intention is a pure act, and an act performed without right intention is an impure act. □

An act which is performed with ill intention or with no good intention, has no value either in the eyes of man, or of God. Things are of value only when they are pure.



FROM THE SPIRITUAL TREE

There is a tree beside my house. I call it the 'Spiritual Tree'. I derive spiritual inspiration from it. A tree is an ever-growing being that was initially a seed possessing the potential of becoming a full-grown tree. A seed takes food from the universe around it and then grows into a tree. The same is true with spirituality, the desire for which is intrinsic to, and an integral part of, the very nature of every human being. To realize this spirituality, Man must derive spiritual food from the universe around him. A tree converts carbon-dioxide into oxygen; a spiritual person is one who can take positive lessons from negative situations. From this perspective, a tree is an embodiment of a spiritual personality. —Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



GREENERY RETURNED

THE tree beside my house before the rainy season had completely dried up. It looked like it had come to the end of its life. It was probably not going to be green and lush again, but after the rainy season, it started to revive. Leaves began to appear on its branches and by the end of August, it had become completely green again. Its freshness had returned completely.

This story is symbolic for human beings. It is necessary for a person's spiritual life to receive "water". One who lives without "water", will have a personality like a dried up tree.

For human life, divine inspiration is like life-giving water. Through it, man ought to establish an eternal bond with God. A bond of this kind will give him renewed freshness. If this bond is broken for any reason, he will become like a dried up tree.

Remembrance (*Zikr*) of God is the link to God Almighty. What does remembering God mean? It is not just the repetition of certain words. It is to remember Him again and again in different situations. For example if you see a tree, you will see the miracle of God in it. Your heart will say, 'O God! The way you have made the tree green and fresh, so also in the same way make me like a green tree'. □

ON THE EVE OF EXAMS

Success in Life

PARENTS are always eager for their children's success. But at the same time, they should be realists. They must limit themselves to doing wise counselling. It would be counterproductive if they constantly question their children and apply mental pressure on them to perform.

Parents must know that in practical life, getting less marks in exams is relative. A student learns irrespective of the marks he scores and even if he scores less in one term, he can score better in the next. This is the case in both education and in practical life. There are many examples to prove this fact. For example, Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Vivekananda were not toppers in education, however, they became heroes in practical life.

The most important things in life are sincerity and determination. Parents must inculcate this spirit in their children. Qualifying in an examination is good only for getting further admissions and it is not necessary for having a better life in the future. Parents must educate their children on the principles of life and try to inculcate in them virtues, like patience, wisdom, adjustment, realistic approach, learning from failure, and knowing that it really doesn't matter if you don't get your way in everything. These are the principles which come to use in real life. Topping in examinations is not a guarantee that the person would also be a topper in life. However, the person who is aware of the principles of life is more likely to be successful.

When it comes to competition with other fellow students it is important to know that one should discover one's own worth and capabilities. Discovering one's potential and turning it into reality is what is important rather than just blindly competing with others. It is a matter of what you are good at and developing that talent. The competition should be with your own better self.

Read the lives of super-achievers. They carved out their own niche due to their own inner qualities. They expected high standards from themselves irrespective of what others were doing. They concentrated on their own development and moved ahead in life facing every challenge. Know that the Creator has given different capabilities to people. You too have a special quality. Discover it and progress in that field. □

THE MONEY CULTURE

For Need, not Greed

WEALTH is one of life's necessities. But it is not life's goal. If wealth is necessary to fulfill life's material requirements, then it must be acquired as the mainstay of human existence. But if wealth is projected as life's goal and its ever-increasing acquisition is considered the most important task, then it can become a source of great misery, which will destroy its seekers not only in this world but also in the Hereafter.

Man has to live in this world for a certain period of time. For this, he requires some material facilities, which may serve as a support in his life. The majority of these things must be purchased with money. So it is essential for everyone to provide himself with the means to do so.

In this respect wealth is a precious asset for all of us.

Man is greater than money. Man should live for a higher purpose, and he should use money solely as his material base for constructive activity.

This world is a testing ground and man has been given freedom, and therefore everything which a man receives is for a test, including wealth. Based on this concept of the creation plan, wealth is also for the purpose of a test. The proper use of money leads man to all kinds of progress, whereas the wrong use of it casts man headlong into the pit of destruction.

Relative to money, there are two cultures prevailing in our society—money for the sake of man and man for the sake of money. The Quran rejects the concept of man for the sake of money, subscribing to the other concept that money is for the sake of man. In the chapter *Al-Takathur* (Greed for more and more) the Quran has this to say:

You were obsessed by greed for more and more till you reached the grave. (102: 1-2)

According to the Quranic concept, money or material goods are only meant to fulfil man's needs. Money is not a goal in itself. Money can fulfil the physical requirements of man, but man is more than a physical entity. Man is an intellectual being, and as such can only find fulfilment in pursuing some alternative goal which is higher than that of money.

Money gives you material comfort, but it cannot give you wisdom and learning. The best course for man is to live as a seeker of truth, wisdom, learning and an ultimate goal that is elevated. That is the only right way of life for man.

What is that elevated goal for a man? It is intellectual development; it is to unfold the spiritual nature of his personality; it is to enhance his mental capacity. All these things are superior to man's physical being.

One who makes the acquisition of wealth his life's goal, will of course, continue to receive bodily nourishment, but his soul will all the while remain starving. The intellectual part of his mind, continuously in an under-nourished state, will finally cease to exist. The activities of earning have to be kept within a certain limit and only then will man find time to attain the nobler goals.

When man takes money as something which will fulfil his needs, he remains on the right path. He can travel along the road of life smoothly and successfully. But when he takes money as his supreme goal, he goes astray. For both men and women money-oriented thinking is the greatest source of distraction from the right path.

Man is greater than money. Man should live for a higher purpose, and he should use money solely as his material base for constructive activity, such as acquiring knowledge, establishing educational institutes and providing essential services for the society. There are many such facilities which need money. Indeed without money it is very difficult to have a successful life on this earth.

Money is a good helper. But it is not a good leader. A money-obsessed man is like one who has made money his leader. Money which is commensurate with needs is good, but excess money is bad. Save yourself from greed and then you will be able to save yourself from being overly money-minded.

Money for the sake of money is bad, but money for the sake of some higher purpose is good; money as a necessity is good, but the money culture *per se* is a disaster. The money culture will keep a man at a very low level which does not behove the potential he is born with. □

This world is a testing ground and man has been given freedom, and therefore everything which a man receives is for a test, including wealth.



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.



JIHAD

A PERUSAL of the Quran followed by a study of latter-day Muslim history will reveal a blatant contradiction between the two—that of principle and practice. Where recent developments in some Muslim countries bespeak the culture of war, the Quran on the contrary, is imbued with the spirit of tolerance. Its culture is not that of war, but of mercy.

At the very beginning of the Quran, the first invocation reads: "In the name of God, the most Merciful, the most Beneficent". Throughout the Quran, God's name is thus invoked no less than 113 times. Moreover, the Quran states that the prophets were sent to the world as a mercy to the people. (21: 107)

The word '*Jihad*' has nowhere been used in the Quran to mean war in the sense of launching an offensive. It is used rather, to mean 'struggle'. The action most consistently called for in the Quran is the exercise of patience. Yet today, the *Muslim Mujahideen* under favourable conditions have equated 'God is Great' with 'War is Great'. For them, the greatest reward is to be able to wield a rifle.

In the light of the ongoing conflict, we must ask why so great a contradiction has arisen between the principles of Islam and the practices of Muslims? There are two reasons which have contributed to this, one is historical exigency and the other is the political interpretation of Islam.

Let us examine each one in detail.

HISTORICAL EXIGENCY

Since time immemorial, military commanders have been accorded positions of great eminence in the annals of history. It is a universal phenomenon that the hero is idolized even in peace time and becomes a model for the people. It is this placing of heroism in the militaristic context, which has been the greatest underlying factor in the undue stress laid on war in the latter phase of Islamic history. With the automatic accord in Muslim society of a place of honour and importance to the heroes of the battlefield, annalists' subsequent compilations of Islamic history have tended to read like an uninterrupted series of wars and conquests.

These early chronicles having set the example, subsequent writings on Islamic history have followed the same pattern of emphasis on militarism. The Prophet's biographies were called *maghazi*, that is, 'The battles fought by the Prophet', yet the Prophet Muhammad in fact did battle only three times in his entire life, and the period of his involvement in these battles did not total more than one and a half days. He fought in self-defence, when hemmed in by aggressors, where he simply had no option. But historians—flying in the face of fact—have converted his whole life into one of confrontation and war.

We must keep in mind that the Prophet Muhammad was born at a time when an atmosphere of militancy prevailed in Arab society, there being, in their view, no other path to justice. But the Prophet always opted for the avoidance of conflict. For instance, in the campaign of *Ahzab*, the Prophet advised his Companions to dig a trench between them and the opponents, thus preventing a head-on clash.

Another well-known instance of the Prophet's dislike for hostilities is the Hudaibiyah peace treaty in which the Prophet accepted all the conditions of the opponents. In the case of the conquest of Makkah, he avoided a battle altogether by making a rapid entry into the city with ten thousand Muslims—a number large enough to awe his opponents into submission.

In the political interpretation of Islam the whole of the religion of Islam wrongly comes to be seen as a collection of parts whose individual and collective significance cannot be understood without linking them with politics.

In this way, on all occasions, the Prophet endeavoured to achieve his objectives by peaceful rather than by war-like means. It is, therefore, unconscionable that in later biographical writings, all the events of his life have been arranged under the heading of 'battles' (*ghazawat*). How he managed to avert the cataclysms of war has not been dealt with in any of the works which purportedly depict his life.

Ibn Khaldun, the celebrated 14th century historian, was the first to lay down definite rules for the study and writing of history and sociology. He followed the revolutionary course of attempting to present history as a chronicle of events centering on the common man rather than on kings, their generals and the battles they fought. But since war heroes were already entrenched as the idols of society, the caravan of writers and historians continued to follow the same well-worn path as had been trodden prior to Ibn Khaldun. When people have come to regard

The need is to discard as superficial and erroneous the militant and political interpretation of Islam, and to adopt the original version of Islam based on peace, mercy and the love of mankind.

war heroes as the greatest of men, it is but natural that it is the events of the battlefield which will be given the greatest prominence in works of history. All other events will either be relegated to the background or omitted altogether.

In the past when the sword was the only weapon of war, militancy did not lead to the mass-scale loss of life and property such as modern warfare brings in its wake. In former times, fighting was confined to the battlefield; the only sufferers were those engaged in the battle. But today, the spear and sword have been replaced by mega-bombs and

devastating long-range missiles, so that killing and destruction take place on a horrendous scale. It is the entire human settlement which has now become the global arena of war. Even the air we breathe and the water we drink are left polluted in the aftermath of war.

People in the West thus find Islam outdated and irrelevant, precisely because of its militant interpretation. Demands for a reform in Islam are on the increase, as the 'old' version of Islam cannot apparently keep pace with the modern world.

But, in reality, it is not reformation which is urgent, but revival. What is needed is to discard as superficial and erroneous the militant and political interpretation of Islam, and to adopt the original version of Islam based on peace, mercy and the love of mankind.

The so-called *Muslim Mujahideen* have been exhorting their co-religionists to do battle all over the world. But the Quran says, "God calls to the home of peace" (10: 25). It is up to right-thinking people everywhere to reject the militant version of Islam, and to start seeing and accepting Islam as it is truly represented by the Quran.

POLITICAL INTERPRETATION OF ISLAM

The second reason for the violence perpetrated in the name of Islam is the erroneous political interpretation of Islam by some Muslim scholars. According to this interpretation a central place was bestowed on politics in the religion. For those scholars who gave such an interpretation, the religion or *deen* was tantamount to establishing its political domination. They saw this as the very purpose or goal that God wants His servants to strive towards. Naturally then, in this understanding of Islam, the rest of *deen* came to be subordinated to politics. Politics assumed the central place, through which every aspect of *deen* could be understood and its importance ascertained. In this way, in their understanding of Islam, every aspect of it acquired a political hue. This naturally resulted in a major deviation.

The political interpretation of the religion of Islam led to a new view about life and the universe in which politics had a pre-eminent place. While accepting that God has given free-will to mankind, and the world is a testing ground on one hand, the proposers of the political interpretation contradict themselves by saying that people must establish the divinely revealed *Shariah* which was conveyed through God's messengers. This law covers a wide gamut of issues, including beliefs, morals, society, civilization and politics. In addition, the political theory finds it necessary to accept God as the Emperor, Ruler and Law maker. They further go on to say that, if someone simply accepts God and believes Him to have no partners, but at the same time, claims to be fully independent in the sphere in which humans have free-will, he actually revolts against God.

According to them such people should be set right through guidance, instruction, exhortation and preaching, but if these methods fail to get them the desired result of establishing Divine Government, then a believer is compelled to take to war so that he can remove the hurdles in the path of this task.

The above interpretation of *deen* presents God's sending of the prophets to the world in a particular political light. Assuming that the prophets' concern was to acquire power and that they had acquired it,

is absolutely wrong, for the very mission of the prophets was to guide people to goodness and what is right.

When Islam is made out to be a political ideology, then quite naturally, the Islamic community is made out to be a political party. Amongst such a party, worship is reduced to a preface to politics. Piety and spiritual excellence come to be shaped in a distinctly political mould. Witnessing to the truth becomes a political act. In other words, in this political interpretation of Islam the whole of the religion of Islam wrongly comes to be seen as a collection of parts whose individual and collective significance cannot be understood without linking them with politics.

The above mentioned two reasons of historical exigency and the political interpretation develop the mindset of militancy in its followers.

The solution to this is to present Islam as it is from the original sources, the Quran and the life and teachings of the Prophet.

CPS International is devoted to this work with teams all over the world and it invites all the peace loving people to join hands in spreading the ideology of peace. □



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ARGUMENT FOR THE LIFE HEREAFTER

From Probability

ONE of the most important tenets of religion is the existence of the life Hereafter. After death, human beings will leave this present ephemeral world, and, on the Day of Judgement, will enter another world, which will be eternal. The present world is but a place of trial where man, throughout his entire life span, is on probation. When the time has come for the Last Reckoning, God will destroy this world and replace it by another world created on an entirely different pattern. All human beings will then be resurrected and will be brought before the Almighty to be judged: it is then that they shall be rewarded, or punished, according to the merits and demerits of their deeds on this earth.

We shall now examine this concept from different standpoints and determine whether it is right or wrong to believe in this concept.

Probability

The question that first arises concerns the possible advent of an after-life in the present system of the universe. Do any events or indications substantiate our view?

The first thing that this concept of the other world presupposes is that man and the universe, in their present form, are not eternal. From the entire array of human knowledge up to the present, this fact stands out as indisputable. We all know, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that for both man and the universe, death is an inescapable fate.

The greatest desire of those who do not believe in the other world is to convert this world into a heaven of eternal bliss. Research into the cause, or causes of death have even been carried out so that it could be forestalled and prevented, thus rendering human beings immortal. But the failure of such research has been abysmal, and with each unsuccessful attempt, it has been borne in more and more upon researchers just how ineluctable death is.

Why does death occur? About two hundred explanations have been put forward as to its causes. Organic decay in the body; the exhaustion of constituents; the atrophying of veins; the replacement of dynamic albumens by less dynamic ones; the wearing out of the tissues; the secretion of poison by intestinal bacteria, which is spread throughout the body, and so on.

The concept of bodily decay would appear to be correct. Machines, shoes, garments and all such material things do wear out with the passage of time. There is, ostensibly, the possibility of our body wearing out too, sooner or later, just as a garment does. But science only partially supports this view of bodily decay, for the human body is very different from a garment, a machine or a piece of rock. It should be likened, rather to, a river which has been flowing for thousands and thousands of years and continues to flow in the same fashion even today. Can we really say that a river becomes old or stagnates?

An American chemist, Dr. Carl Linus Pauling (b. 1901), recipient of two Noble Prizes, one of Chemistry in 1954 and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1962, has pointed out that, theoretically man is cast to a great extent in an eternal mould, cells in the human body being just like machines which automatically remove their own defects. In spite of this, man does grow old, and does die.

When the time has come for the Last Reckoning, God will destroy this world and replace it by another world created on an entirely different pattern.

But let us leave death for a moment and look at life. Our bodies are constantly undergoing a process of renewal. Molecules of albumen present within our cells are continually being produced, destroyed and reproduced. Cells too (except the nerve cells) are regularly destroyed and replaced by newly formed cells. It has been estimated that the blood in a human body is fully renewed within the short

span of about four months. And, within a few years, all of the atoms in a human body are totally replaced. It shows that man is more like a river than a mere structure of flesh and bones.

In short, the human body is constantly undergoing a process of change. This being so, all concepts of the body becoming old and worn-out are seen to have no basis in fact. Consider that in the normal course of events, the indirect causes of death, such as injury, various types of deficiencies, the clogging of arteries and the wasting away of muscle, tissue etc., are generally dealt with, bit by bit by the body's own processes, (sometimes with the help of medical treatment) but, in any case are eliminated in the course of time, without either singly or jointly having caused the onset of death. It is normally much later in life that death occurs. How then can these injuries, deficiencies, etc., be held responsible for the death of the body? This would appear to imply that the cause of death does not lie in the intestines, veins or heart, but somewhere else.

Another explanation has it that nerve cells are the cause of death because they remain unchanged throughout life and are never replaced. The number of nerve cells in a human body thus decline year after year, thereby weakening the nervous system as a whole. If it is correct to say that the nervous system is the Achilles' heel of the human body, it should conversely, be correct to say that a body having no nervous system at all should be able to survive for the longest period of time.

But observation does not support this view. A tree, which is devoid of a nervous system does survive much longer than a man, and in fact, survives the longest of all forms of plant-life. But wheat, which likewise, has no nervous system, survives for only one year. And the amoeba, with a minute nervous system, survives for only half an hour.

These examples would appear to imply the reverse—that is, animals belonging to the higher species, with perfect nervous systems, should live longer. But that is not the case either. Creatures relatively lower down the evolutionary scale, like crocodiles, turtles and fishes, are the ones who survive the longest.

All the investigations so far carried out with the objective of showing that death need not be a certainty have met with total failure. The fact still remains that, one-day, all human beings will have to die. There is no avoiding death. Dr. Alexis Carrel, a French Nobel prize-winner, who has done advanced research in tissue culture, has discussed this problem at length under the heading of *Inward Time*.

Man will never tire of seeking immortality. He will not attain it, because he is bound by certain laws of his organic constitution.

He may succeed in retarding, perhaps even in reversing in some measure, the inexorable advance of physiological time.

Never will he vanquish death.

Anomalies in the organization of the present set-up of the universe, which periodically result in minor calamities, are indicative of what is going to happen on a large scale, at some time in the future.

The earthquake is the terrestrial phenomenon which most obviously forewarns us of the possible advent of Doomsday. The interior of the earth is, in fact, composed of red-hot semi-molten magma, which

We all know, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that for both man and the universe, death is an inescapable fate.

is ejected periodically through volcanic activity in the form of lava. Sometimes strong vibrations of the earth's crust can also be felt. These are produced by the shrinking of the globe due to the cooling process which has been going on for aeons. From time to time, the wrinkling of the earth's surface assumes gigantic proportions and the resulting earthquakes are like a unilateral attack of nature upon man in which nature definitely has the upper hand. 'When we remember that only a thin, rocky crust, comparable to the skin of an apple, separates us from the red-hot, semi-molten interior of our planet, we do not wonder that the inhabitants of its surface are so often reminded of the "physical hell" lying below the peaceful woodlands and blue seas.'

Such earthquakes occur almost every day in varying degrees of intensity, some regions being more prone to earthquakes than others. The earthquake which struck Shensi, a district in China, is the oldest of the highly destructive earthquakes recorded in history. It occurred

***An earthquake is,
in fact, but a small
reminder of the day
of resurrection.***

in 1556 AD. and took a heavy toll of more than 800,000 lives. Similarly, on the 1st November 1755, a volcano erupted cataclysmically in Portugal, totally destroying the city of Lisbon. In the course of this earthquake, within hardly six minutes, 30,000 people were killed and all the buildings were destroyed. It has been calculated that this earthquake caused an area four times the size of Europe to tremble. Another earthquake of the same intensity

rocked Assam in 1950 AD. It is reckoned to be one of the ten most violent and devastating earthquakes on record. The whole of the northern part of Assam was catastrophically shaken and the course of the river Brahmaputra was diverted.

An earthquake is, in fact, but a small reminder of the day of resurrection. When the earth is split asunder with a terrible rumbling; when buildings come tumbling down like playing cards; when the upper layers of the earth are cracked open and the interior of the earth is spewed out, when cities bustling with life are reduced to ashes in a matter of minutes; when the earth is strewn with dead bodies, like shoals of fish washed up on the sea coast, man realizes his utter helplessness in the face of nature. What is most tragic about earthquakes and volcanic eruptions is the fact that no one can predict when or where they will take place. And, when they do, everything happens in a flash, leaving little or no time for escape. The day of the resurrection will come upon us all of a sudden, just like an earthquake. Such natural catastrophes

demonstrate, most awesomely, God's capacity to destroy the earth at any moment.

Even more terrifying events take place in the outer reaches of the universe. In the infinitude of its space, innumerable, enormous celestial bodies are in rapid and continuous motion colliding and annihilating one another. Asteroids and comets slam into planets, stars explode and other stars and galaxies are ripped apart by black holes. In terms of scale, perhaps nothing is as violent as collisions between huge clusters of galaxies. Studies in astronomy having confirmed that this is an actual possibility, it would not be surprising if they did collide. Our Solar System may well be the result of a smaller collision of this type. If we can visualize such a collision taking place on a greatly enlarged scale, the day of resurrection will no longer seem impossible, nor even such a remote possibility as we had perhaps at first imagined.

Believers in the concept of the life Hereafter contend that a time is bound to come when the forces of destruction, which are present in the universe in embryonic forms, will one day assume gigantic proportions. What is latent today will certainly manifest itself tomorrow, and the coming of the day of resurrection will be a reality. Today we apprehend it as a probability; tomorrow we shall witness it as a fact. □



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EXAMPLE OF THE PROPHET

Character to Emulate

ABOUT 1400 years ago the Prophet was forced by the Quraysh tribe to leave his native city of Makkah. He showed the utmost patience and restraint in the face of provocation by the Makkans but finally to avoid confrontation, left the city along with a handful of his followers. In Madinah the Prophet was welcomed by the *Ansar* (the people who lived in Madinah) who treated the immigrants as their brothers and sisters and even shared their possessions and properties with them.

In Madinah, the Prophet founded the mosque known today as the Prophet's Mosque, himself taking part in the construction. It became the centre of his activities, from where he would preach the message of Islam and ensure that the revelations were memorized and written down by his Companions.

The Prophet laid great emphasis on character building, excellence in moral and social conduct, good family ties and the dignity of labour.

The Prophet laid great emphasis on character building, excellence in moral and social conduct, good family ties and the dignity of labour. Charity was one of the main features of the new society. The Prophet said, "Give alms from your right hand in such a manner that your left hand should not know of it". But over and above giving alms and feeding the poor, the Prophet gave much wider meaning to the concept of charity: as he believed that every good act was a form of charity; smiling at a fellow human being; showing the road to

a person who has lost his way; removing hindrances such as thorns and stones from the road, assisting the blind; helping a person to mount his beast; uttering words of comfort and replying to questions with mildness. For the Prophet, all of these constituted charity.

The Prophet's kindness and merciful nature was unparalleled. Often when he passed by a group of children, he would say, "Children are the flowers of God", and pass his hand affectionately over their heads and sometimes even joined in their innocent games. He gave special honour and regard to parents. Those, he believed, who served their parents well, were deserving of Paradise. A man once asked the Prophet, "Who rightfully deserves the best treatment from me?" "Your mother", said the Prophet. Then the man said. "Who comes next?" "Your mother",

said the Prophet. "Who is after that?", asked the man, "Your mother", was the Prophet's answer. "Who comes next?" insisted the man again. "Your father", said the noble Prophet.

The Prophet gave great importance to family ties. He said, "The best man is he who is best to his wife". Likewise, the best woman is the one whose husband feels pleased with her. The Prophet always emphasized good relations with neighbours and visiting the sick. He said that on the Day of Resurrection, God would say, "O son of man! I was sick, and you did not visit Me". The man would answer, "O my Lord! How could I visit You when You are the Lord of the world?" God would answer, "Did you not know that such and such of My servants was sick, and you did not visit him. Did you not know that if you had visited him, you would surely have found Me with him?"

The Prophet categorically prohibited gambling and the use of wine and would tell his followers that eating moderately is the best solution to avoid disease.

In a society based on good moral values, evils such as gambling and drinking find no place. Thus the Prophet categorically prohibited gambling and the use of wine and would tell his followers that eating moderately is the best solution to avoid disease. "Do not kill your hearts with excess of eating and drinking". He told them to divide the stomach into three parts; one third for food, one third for water and one third to remain empty. The Prophet also felt very strongly about oral hygiene. He said if he had not feared putting his followers to trouble, he would have made it compulsory for them to clean their teeth five times daily before every prayer, and emphasized that "cleanliness is one half of faith".

Simple living and contentment were the key teachings in his life. "When you see a person, who has been given more money and beauty than you, look then to those who have been given less". In so doing, we will thank God for His blessings, rather than feel deprived. The Prophet's emphasis on moral values was so high that he advised his followers never to say that if people treat us well, we will treat them well, and if people treat us badly, we will treat them likewise. He taught them to be well mannered with everyone. He also taught them that under no circumstances should they become angry; "The strong man is not one who throws people down, but one who withholds himself from anger".

The Prophet encouraged his followers to earn their livelihood through trade and by the labours of their hands and to honour the dignity of labour. One of his saying is, "Pay the labourer his wages before his

sweat dries". He also said that a trader must be very honest, while selling his goods, he must inform the buyer of any possible defect in the merchandise.

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The Prophet's life was marked by simple living and sublime character, prayer and devotion, compassion and humility. After his death, people used to ask the Prophet's wife, Aisha, how he lived at home. "Like any ordinary man", she would answer. "He would sweep the house, stitch his own clothes, mend his own sandals, water the camels, milk the goats, help the servants at their work, and eat his meal with them and he would go to fetch what we needed from the market".

Anyone who claims to be a follower of the Prophet on the road to Paradise has to imbibe such a character otherwise it will only be considered as a superficial belief of accepting the Prophet as an example. □



HUMILITY
is the greatest
quality that man
can have, and
arrogance is
undoubtedly
the worst.

MAULANA W. KHAN

BEFORE DEATH AND AFTER DEATH

To Contemplate Seriously

IN the whole of human history, man's biggest forgetfulness has been just one and that is about death. It is a negligence of such proportions that hardly a few persons can be discovered who have not been so in this regard.

The present world is a testing ground. It means that in the present world, all that man has is given to him as a 'testing material'. Death brings an end to this test period. That's why at the moment of death, all these things which a person has had as long as he was alive are taken away immediately. Even his name is taken away and people start referring to the person as a 'body'.

After death, man enters a new world suddenly. This world is a world where he will face the consequences of his actions. Earlier, if the man was living with his 'test material', after death he will have to live with the result of his deeds done in his ephemeral world. Life before death is temporary—about 100 years at the maximum—but life after death is eternal.

People have many possessions while they are on earth. All these things are automatically acquired from the moment one is born. That's why man takes these things for granted. He cannot think that all these bounties will suddenly be wrested from him. After death, man will suddenly find himself in a situation where he is absolutely alone and totally destitute.

Thinking about this serious reality should have been the greatest issue for a human being. But people tend to ignore and remain careless and insensitive towards this reality, until death suddenly comes upon them.

Death indicates to us our reality. It tells us that we are moving from a situation, where we think we have control over things, to another situation, in another world, where we will have no control over anything at all. It tells us that we are moving from light to darkness, from everything to nothing. Before death, humans are in a world where they think they are the masters of their destiny. But after death, they are

After death, man enters a new world suddenly. This world is a world where he will face the consequences of his actions. Earlier, if the man was living with his 'test material', after death he will have to live with the result of his deeds done in his ephemeral world.

taken to a world where they are compelled to accept being completely subordinated to someone else—God.

If you keep this reality in mind, your life will be totally transformed. It will make you realize, for instance, how absurd it is to trouble others, because you will have to answer for this after death, when you yourself will be under someone else's control. It will make you ashamed of thinking yourself to be superior to others, because you will realize that the supposed superiority that will one day be snatched away from you is actually totally unreal. □



If you face any kinds of
undesirable experience
from another person you
should try to find out
your own weakness that
gave the other party the
opportunity to do so.

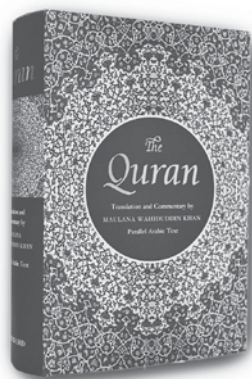
MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures

The Quran is the book of God. It has been preserved in its entirety since its revelation to the Prophet of Islam between 610 and 632 AD. It is a book that brings glad tidings to mankind, along with divine admonition, and stresses the importance of man's discovery of the Truth on a spiritual and intellectual level.

Translated from Arabic and commentary by
Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



We gave Scriptures, wisdom and prophethood to the Children of Israel, and provided them with good things and favoured them over all other people. We gave them clear arguments in matters [of religion]. It was only after knowledge came to them that they differed among themselves out of mutual rivalry. On the Day of Resurrection your Lord will judge between them regarding their differences. Then We set you on a clear path [of religion]: so follow it, and do not yield to the desires of those who have no knowledge.

They can be of no avail to you against God. The wrongdoers are friends of one another, while the friend of the righteous is God.

This [Book] brings enlightenment and guidance to mankind, and is a blessing for those who have firm faith. (45: 16-20)

According to verse 16, God exalted the Children of Israel over the peoples of the world. This parallels what was said of the people (*ummah*) of the Prophet Muhammad, i.e. 'You are the best *ummah* (nation)' (3: 110). To make a group the bearer of the Book of God is in fact making it responsible for conveying the message to other nations.

In principle, the Children of Israel were commanded to convey the message to the whole world, as is now the case with the Muslims. But the Children of Israel, by introducing deviations into their Book, lost this status forever.

There is always uniformity in the authentic teachings of religion. But additions to them by scholars create differences and undue complexities. Then every scholar makes additions according to his taste. Thereafter every scholar and his followers set about proving

their additions to be correct and others' additions to be incorrect. In this way, religious sects start forming and finally a stage is reached when one religion becomes divided into several religions.

Do those who commit evil deeds imagine that We shall deal with them in the same way as We deal with those who have attained to faith and do righteous deeds, that they will be alike in their living and their dying? How badly they judge!

God has created the heavens and the earth for a true purpose, so that every soul may be rewarded for whatever it has earned, and no one will be wronged.

[Prophet], consider the one who has taken his own desire as a deity, whom God allows to stray in the face of knowledge, sealing his ears and heart and covering his eyes—who can guide such a person after God [has abandoned him]? Will you not take heed? (45: 21-23)

When the Children of Israel distorted their revealed religion, God thereupon revealed the Quran through the Prophet Muhammad. Since no other prophet was to appear after him, God caused the Quran to be preserved and kept safe by special arrangements, so that it should never again happen that the religion of God be lost in the labyrinth of human additions.

One who thinks that it is all the same whether a man leads a virtuous life or a life of evil—since either way he ultimately has to die and perish—is nurturing an extremely erroneous idea. This way of thinking runs counter to the consciousness of justice which is found in the very nature of every man right from his birth. Moreover, this is denying the meaningfulness of the universe, which is immanent in it to the ultimate degree. The fact is that man's inherent nature and the vast universe around him both completely nullify the concept by which life is treated as being so purposeless as not to lead to any significant outcome.

To make desire one's deity means giving it the supreme position in one's life. One who thinks and acts under the influence of desire has, in effect, made himself a slave to it. Man's mind is perfectly capable of distinguishing between right and wrong. But, when he mindlessly follows his desires, he closes the door to reason. Then when he encounters arguments in support of the Truth, he fails to feel their weight. In reply to every statement, he presents false arguments and rejects it. Such behaviour ultimately impairs his mental powers. □

ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

What is your view on the Ram Mandir—Babri Masjid issue, and how can the Indian government resolve the issue with peace and satisfy all parties?

In my lifetime, I have not only seen Babri Mosque but have also offered prayer inside it. Unfortunately, the challenge we face in this case is that the issue has been emotionalized and an emotional issue cannot be resolved easily.

My stand on Babri Masjid-Ram Mandir issue is the same since day-one. In my view, whenever a possibility of a peaceful resolution exists, one party to the conflict must avail it and not sink into quarrels or controversy. After the mosque was demolished, I suggested that Muslims could adopt the same model of relocating mosques which had been adopted by Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, Syria and Egypt.

Post Islam when the requirement to offer congregational '*namaz*' (form of worship in Islam) emerged in many places, Muslims made mosques wherever the need arose and this continued for almost a thousand years. Following the oil revolution, the Arab countries had enough wealth to take up the task of city planning. In doing so, they realized that several mosques were built at locations that were acting as a hindrance to their amenities and infrastructure planning framework. This issue was brought up to the *ulema* (Islamic Scholars) for discussion and the renowned Arab cleric, Sheikh Abdullah bin Baaz gave a *fatwa* (unanimously accepted) to relocate these mosques. And this is exactly what followed. For instance, Masjid-e-Bilal, which was made adjacent to the boundary of *Haram* (Kabah) was also relocated and today it is at a location different from where it was originally built. Physically the relocated mosques were made out of new infrastructure, however they shared the same lineage as to the mosque which existed in the original location. The only loss was archaeological in nature.

In line with my view, the then UP Chief Minister had proposed that if Muslims were to agree to relocation, he would be the first person to carry on his head the first bricks to be placed in its foundation. While the Government appreciated my suggestion, many of the Muslim leaders unfortunately did not accept the proposal.

Many Muslim leaders incited the masses by saying that the Arab model would not work in India. They did not realize that this was a matter

of an Islamic principle, which does not have two versions. If it was implementable in Saudi Arabia, then it was implementable in India as well. So, the issue which would have been resolved amicably was not done so.

The Court of Law will indeed find it difficult to resolve this matter. In 1991, the Indian Parliament passed a legislation called the Places of Worship Act, 1991. According to this Act, the government of India was bound to maintain the status quo of all places of worship on Indian soil as it stood in 1947. But there was an exception to that of the Babri Masjid of Ayodhya. The Act maintained that the Babri Masjid issue was in court, so the government would wait and it would be its duty to implement the verdict of the court when it was given.

In a nutshell, what is needed is an objective evaluation of the case to see what is possible and not what is ideal. This was the theme of my article on this topic in the Hindustan Times, which was titled “Acceptance of Reality”—the message remains the same—we must accept what is possible as well as practical and not run after unrealistic ideals. □



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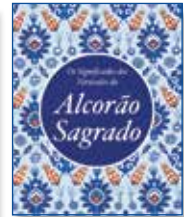
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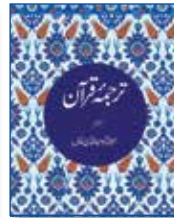
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