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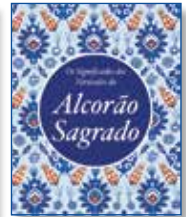
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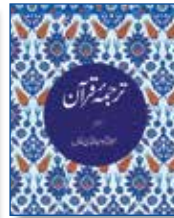
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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

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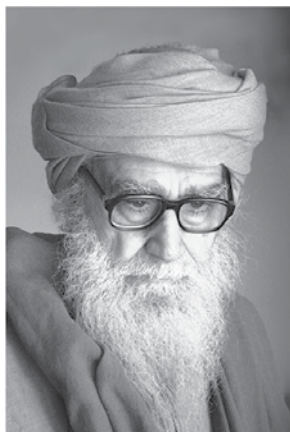
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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

DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SELF STRUGGLE

SOME highly educated Muslims have initiated a concept called 'Institutionalizing Constitutional Rights' with the aim of developing the Muslim community. This involves making recommendations, such as the formation of institutions by the government for the development of Muslims.

These words sound beautiful, but they are not workable in reality. Development is a goal that can be achieved only through self-struggle. It cannot be had through the help of any government.

In this matter the basic principle is that if a community wants development, it would have to stand up on merit and not expect to make progress through favours. Whenever one receives favours, the spirit of incentive is diminished. Progress can be attained only in an environment of competition and challenge, and not through favours granted.

Muslim leaders should advise Muslim masses to enter the educational mainstream—they should take admission in good educational

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

institutions and pursue serious study. There is no other choice in this matter. Here the principle of 'compete or perish', alone works.

Progress can be attained only in an environment of competition and challenge, and not through favours granted.

This scheme of things for development appears arduous, however it is so only for the initial generations. When a community faces such competitive situations, the people who begin this journey might face hardships, but their struggle would be for the greater good. Very soon, such a community would progress and the maxim 'compete or perish' would turn into 'compete and succeed'. □

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan
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Reasoning Ability

Reason cannot be created but it can certainly be developed. Everyone has a two-fold duty of developing their reasoning ability and using it in life. Reason is a powerful potential of the human mind and we are duty bound to turn this potential into actuality.

THE MIRACLE OF NOT GETTING AGITATED

Balanced Reaction

IF you react to something by getting worked up, agitated and angry, the result will be negative. If you happen to face something very difficult—say for example somebody’s harsh words—and, not allowing yourself to lose your balance, you reply without getting provoked, the result will be nothing short of miraculous. The outcome will be completely favourable. This is because if you react by getting angry, it will provoke the ego of the person you are reacting to. He will unnecessarily become your enemy. In contrast, if you reply in a balanced manner, it awakens the other person’s conscience, and then you will be able to relate with each other in a natural way. Every person, you must remember, is your friend—real or potential. It is your behaviour that leads to this friendship remaining intact or turning the other person into an enemy.

If you react by getting angry, it will provoke the ego of the person you are reacting to. He will unnecessarily become your enemy.

Consider in this regard a historical example. In the 13th century CE, the Mongols attacked the Abbasid Sultanate. From Samarkand in the East to Aleppo in the West, they captured a vast stretch of the territory that formed a part of the Muslim Sultanate. But a few years later, something miraculous happened—the majority of the Mongol tribes accepted Islam. Once enemies of Islam, they became its followers.

The noted historian Thomas Walker Arnold (1864-1930) researched this subject. In a chapter titled ‘*Spread of Islam Among the Mongols*’ in his well-known book *The Preaching of Islam*, he writes:

Tuqluq Timur Khan (1347-1363) is said to have owed his conversion to a holy man from Bukhara, by the name Shaykh Jamal al-Din. This Shaykh, in company with a number of travellers, had unwittingly trespassed on the game-preserves of the prince, who ordered them to be bound hand and foot and brought before him. In reply to his angry question how they had dared interfere with his hunting, the Shaykh pleaded that they were strangers and were quite unaware that they were trespassing on forbidden ground. Learning that they were Persians, the prince said that a dog was worth more than a Persian. “Yes,” replied the Shaykh, “if we had not the true faith, we should indeed be worse than the dogs.”

Struck with his reply, the Khan ordered this bold Persian to be brought before him on his return from hunting, and taking him aside asked him to explain what he meant by these words and what was "faith". The Shaykh then set before him the doctrines of Islam with such fervour and zeal that the heart of Khan that before had been hard as a stone melted like wax, and so terrible a picture did the holy man draw of the state of unbelief that the prince was convinced of the blindness of his own errors, and said, "Were I now to make profession of the faith of Islam, I should not be able to lead my subjects into the true path. But bear with me a little, and when I have entered into the possession of the kingdom of my forefathers, come to me again.

If you reply in a balanced manner, it awakens the other person's conscience, and then you will be able to relate with each other in a natural way.

Some other developments took place after this meeting with Shaykh Jamal al-Din, and Tuqluq Timur Khan accepted Islam. After this, with great wisdom, the Khan told his people about Islam, and the majority of the Mongols entered its fold. Had Shaykh Jamal al-Din responded to Tuqluq Timur Khan by getting provoked and angry, it would have given a completely different turn to history. His normal response set history in a favourable direction. □



Dedication

Dedicate yourself totally for the attainment of a goal. If any thought comes to your mind as may distract you from the goal, fight it.

ESTABLISHING OR UPHOLDING DEEN?

Reformation of the Individual

God has ordained for you the same religion (deen) which He enjoined on Noah, and which We have revealed to you, and which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus, so that you should remain steadfast in religion (aqim ud deen) and not become divided in it... (42: 13)



MANY present day scholars have interpreted this verse of the Quran in a manner that is not only incorrect in principle but has also turned the Muslim mind towards violence and terrorism. The bloodshed and destruction undertaken in the name of Islam or *Islamic Jihad* that the world is witness to today is a direct or indirect result of the incorrect and political interpretation. Such an interpretation deviates from all the original and authentic interpretations of this verse within the Islamic knowledge database.

These scholars have presented an interpretation of the verse that implies that the goal of Islam is the establishment of the rule of God and that it is the responsibility of the (*ummah*) followers of Islam to work towards the establishment and enforcement of the (*Shariah*) law of God on land. In order to understand the error of this interpretation, we present here an academic analysis of the verse in question.

In this verse of the Quran, what is meant by *deen* and what is the meaning of *aqim ud deen*? Pondering about this matter, one of the first things that comes to mind is that the word *deen*—like many other words—has several different meanings and connotations. For example *deen* as ‘judgement’ as in (1: 4); *deen* as ‘law’ (12: 76); *deen* as ‘follower’ (4: 125); *deen* as ‘religion’ (109: 6) etc.

The beliefs and fundamental principles taught by the different prophets was identical, but there were considerable differences in terms of the laws (Shariah) and practical commandments.

It would not be right to say that the meaning of *aqim ud deen* in this verse is to ‘establish the *deen* in all its meanings’. Saying so, would be against the rules of grammar. It is an accepted principle of grammar that if a word that has several different meanings is used in a sentence, then only that singular meaning of the word is implied as is inferred

from the context. Additionally, taking *aqim ud deen* as 'to establish the *deen* in all its meanings' would be unreasonable as with all the other meanings, 'to establish the day of judgement' would also be implied; whereas establishing the day of judgement is a matter solely in the domain of God, with man having absolutely nothing to do with it.

Now, consider the context of this verse of the Quran and the implied meaning of the word *deen* as evident from the context. An obvious inference from this verse is that it is a commandment about the establishment of the very same *deen* that was revealed not only to the Prophet of Islam but also to the other prophets before him. The verse commands us to follow and practise this same singular and unique *deen*.

Religion will not be corrupted if the right commandment is taken from the Quranic verses relevant to it.

Now, as far as the beliefs and fundamental principles taught by the different prophets are concerned, their *deen* was identical, but there were considerable differences in terms of the details of the laws (*Shariah*) and practical commandments that they taught.

Hence, this Quranic verse can only indicate that portion of *deen* that was common to the teachings of all the prophets. It cannot include all the laws (*Shariah*) that were revealed to the Prophet of Islam. The Quran has clearly stated

that the laws (*Shariah*) revealed to the various prophets were different from each other (5: 48). Thus, only those aspects of the *deen* revealed to the different prophets can be followed, which excludes their *Shariah* and methodology and in which there is no disparity.

All the commentators and interpreters of the Quran have explained this verse as noted above without exception. There is no Quranic scholar who has interpreted this verse of *aqim ud deen* to mean 'establish the *Shariah* together with all its religious laws'. Instead, all the commentators agree that it means to uphold—excluding their *Shariah*—all those fundamental and universal aspects of *deen* that is common to all the prophets.

As an example, here is presented an extract from the Arabic commentary *Al-Jami li Ahkam al-Quran* by Imam Abu Abdullah Al-Qurtubi (died 1273 CE):

It [*aqim ud deen*] means the oneness of God and obedience to Him, and faith in His prophets, His books and the Last Day, and all those things on the basis of which one becomes a Muslim. Here is not meant the *Shariahs* that are given in accordance

with the conditions and interests of [different] followers or *ummahs*, because these have always remained different. God has proclaimed a different *Shariah* and method for each one.

Thus, this verse says, O Muhammad, We have given you and Noah the same religion. Those principles of the religion in which there is no difference of *Shariah* laws. And those are, the oneness of God, and *salaath* (prayer), *Zakath*, fasting, seeking the nearness of God through good deeds; honesty the honouring of promises, fulfilling your commitments, kindness, compassion; to know that associating others with God and killing of human beings, adultery are prohibited; hurting or harming others, ill treating animals, indulging in evil and corruption are forbidden. All of these principles are what is meant by the common *deen*. There is no disparity amongst these principles between the prophets, how many ever they may be.

It is thus understood by the context of the Quranic verse and from the interpretation of all the commentators and interpreters, that *aqim ud deen* does not mean the 'establishment on earth of the complete religion together with its *Shariah* and laws', but it means that it is desired of every Muslim to steadfastly remain on those principles of *deen* that can be held onto in an individual capacity. In reality, this verse of the Quran is addressed to the individual and not to the system or society. The establishment of a society is an organisational matter and the commands and injunctions relating to this have been mentioned in other verses of the Quran and in the *Hadith*, and it is from these sources that we should seek guidance. As regards the verse in question quoted in the beginning of this article, it seeks the devotion of the individual and only this is the understanding to be gleaned from it.

If a commandment is derived from a verse that does not clearly and completely present it, there will only be delusion and degeneration.

This issue is also related to the matter of identifying which commandment is to be inferred from which verse. For instance, from the verses of *salath*, the commandments of *salath* is to be inferred and not those regarding Haj or *Jihad*. Similarly, from the verses related to the personal responsibilities of the individual, it would not be proper to construe the commandments related to the societal responsibilities of the *ummah*.

Religion will not be corrupted if the right commandment is taken from the Quranic verses relevant to it. All the requirements and guidelines for its followers will be clear and practical. On the other hand if a commandment is derived from a verse that does not clearly and completely present it, there will only be delusion and degeneration.

As an example, consider the verse, 'Believers, be strict in upholding justice...' (4: 135). This verse is a directive that shows the personal responsibility of a Muslim. It means, 'O Muslims, in your personal lives

God's law is based on the principle of 'responsibility according to capacity'.

remain firm on the path of justice, however much it may affect you.' Now if the societal and political commandment to establish a judicial system is taken from this verse then its message will be completely reversed. A Muslim, instead of taking personal guidance from the verse will direct his efforts towards the political rulers and administrators. He will have no personal concern or consideration to be just and conscientious in his dealings;

instead he will take to the streets rallying towards the establishment of the Islamic flag of justice in the whole world. His resolve will be to fight against all those political forces that will be an obstacle in the establishment of the system of Islamic justice in the world. Personal introspection will not move him, instead he will launch a culture of violence against others.

In this way, there will begin an irreligious movement in the name of religion with loud and powerful campaigns, but the very essence on the basis of which it began will be missing—that is a religion that is desirable to God.

There is another important aspect of this matter. The verse in question regarding *aqim ud deen* is from Chapter 42, *Al-Shura* of the Quran. It is a fact that this Chapter was revealed in Makkah at a time when a large portion of the Quran had not yet been revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Besides those parts of the Quran that were related to the *Shariah* and the laws had not yet been given to the believers.

The period of revelation of this verse of *aqim ud deen* establishes without any doubt that the word *deen* in the verse cannot be taken to mean 'the complete *deen*', as at this time, it had not yet been fully revealed. It is obvious that one cannot be asked to establish a commandment that has not been revealed. For instance, there is a commandment in the Makkan chapters of the Quran to 'establish prayer'. This verse at

the time of its revelation cannot be taken to mean the 'establishment of the congregational prayers five times a day', as at that time the commandment of five daily prayers had not been given to the believers. Similarly, in the verse of *aqim ud deen*, we cannot derive a meaning for political or societal injunctions as this verse is a Makkan verse and such commands had not yet been revealed in Makkah.

This verse of Chapter *Al-Shura* mentions other prophets relating that they were also given this injunction of 'establishing the *deen*'. But it is a fact that besides Prophet Moses, the other prophets were not given any political or constitutional commandments; not even in their later years. In such a situation a commandment to these prophets to 'establish and enforce the complete *deen*' on earth is even more so incomprehensible. God's law is based on the principle of 'responsibility according to capacity'. For the believers in the Makkan period and for the majority of the prophets, the establishment of the 'complete *deen*' was beyond their capacity. Hence it was not possible that at such a time they should be charged with such a responsibility.

Deliberating on this verse, we can understand that *aqim ud deen* in reality is the command to uphold a personal *deen* or religion. Such a religion that any individual can abide by it at every place and under any circumstance. This injunction that appears in the plural form in the Chapter *Al-Shura* also appears at another place in the singular form as: 'Devote yourself single-mindedly to the *deen*'. (30: 30)

This verse implies that you should imbibe in mind and heart, the truth that has been made manifest through revelations from God. That such a person's thoughts now turn toward this truth so that it becomes a focus of all his endeavours.

A believer speaks the truth in every situation; whether it be in his favour or against him. He lives amongst others as one who fears the punishment of hell and longs for entry into Paradise.

With this discovery, his complete personality will now submit to God, the Lord of the universe. He becomes devoted to God, worshipping Him alone. He becomes immersed in the praise and glory of God. All his emotions of fear and love will be focussed on God.

This verse means that the one who imbibes it will have a relationship with God that becomes so strong that his character and conduct are moulded in accordance with God's will. His speech glorifies the Almighty. His behaviour takes on the colour of a true worshipper. He

begins to live amongst people as one in whom God-consciousness and the accountability of the Hereafter is ever present.

Such a person's life is free of all hypocrisy. His character is shaped by higher principles rather than personal gain or considerations. He deals justly with others. His heart is completely free of malice, jealousy and vengeance. He speaks the truth in every situation; whether it be in his favour or against him. He lives amongst others as one who fears the punishment of Hell and longs for entry into Paradise.

He is one who acknowledges others and does not wrong them. His heart is full of modesty, not pride. He desires goodness towards all and bears no ill feelings toward others. He upholds his commitments to others and fulfils his promises. He does not slander or pick faults and always speaks in a just and truthful manner.

His acceptance of the truth lifts him above all material considerations taking him into a spiritual world. He is always conscious of God. He desires only the mercy of the Almighty. He longs for Paradise. He associates with others only to seek their help in the path towards God.

He develops a vision that is capable of discerning the hidden realities in the apparent and obvious. In the scenes of nature and creation, he comprehends the power and majesty of the Creator. Everything in the world and the universe becomes an exposition of the awesome

attributes of the Almighty. His insight and judgement are so refined that the entire universe becomes a canvas of God realization. He finds an increase in faith and God-consciousness in everything.

The truth is that making the reformation of the individual as the goal results in the reformation of society as a whole. The soul of all reformation is the reformation of the individual soul.

To summarize, this verse does not ask for the establishment of *deen* on earth, but for the establishment of *deen* on oneself. It calls for personal introspection and not the introspection of others. It requires a personal submission to the injunctions of God; not using violence to force others in the name of making them submit to God. It desires that man shed his own tears in the remembrance

of God, not the blood of others. *Aqim ud deen* means to fill our lives with the discovery of God; not fill the world with hatred and violence in the name of establishing the law of God on land. *Aqim ud deen* requires the development of a divine personality in our own selves; not filling the

world with conflict and enmity in the name of establishing the order of God's law.

This verse demands the observance of *deen* or adherence to *deen*, not the enforcement of *deen* or the establishment of *deen*. Its goal is the introspection of the individual not the scrutiny of others. It is a struggle to be undertaken in the mind and personality of a believer, not a public demonstration in the fields of politics and governance.

The target of the Islamic mission is the individual, not the society. This does not mean that Islam does not have any commands or guidance for society. The truth is that making the reformation of the individual as the goal results in the reformation of society as a whole. The soul of all reformation is the reformation of the individual soul. Instead, if society is targeted whilst ignoring the individual then there will be neither a reformation of society nor a reformation of the individual.

....God does not change the condition of a people's lot, unless they change what is in their hearts...(THE QURAN 13: 11) □



Learning Spirit

Opportunities for learning are abundant in every circumstance. But a person has to have an open mind to benefit from this. The world is virtually a global university for learning, and requires no formal admission. The only qualification required to benefit from this university is the willingness or readiness to receive impressions or ideas. People tend to accept anything that goes in their favour and get offended if something is said against them. This is the greatest obstacle to learning. A person having the learning spirit is free from prejudice and receptive to new arguments and ideas making it possible to learn from anyone. The learning spirit is the greatest source of intellectual and personality development. But the condition for making use of it for oneself is that whenever a person tells something one should always give a positive response.

WAYS OF SELF-CORRECTION

Fear of Accountability

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

When the earth is shaken with its violent shaking, when the earth shakes off her burdens, when man asks, 'What is happening to her?'; on that Day it will narrate its account, for your Lord has so directed it. On that Day people will come forward in separate groups to be shown their deeds: whoever has done the smallest bit of good will see it; while whoever has done the smallest particle of evil will see it. (99: 1-8)

THESE are the verses of Chapter *Al-Zalzalah* (The Earthquake) of the Quran. The earthquake on Doomsday will be the announcement of the end of the testing period for man. This would mean that the freedom which was theirs on account of their being on trial, has now been snatched away from them. Now the time has come when human beings will be recompensed for their deeds. Today, God's world is silent, but when conditions change, everything found here will start

Whatever a man does or says or even thinks, is being recorded at every moment. And when the time comes, this world will repeat everybody's story in such a way that not a thing, great or small, will be left out.

talking. The inventions of the present day have proved that lifeless or inanimate things also have the capacity to 'talk.' A performance in a studio is fully reproduced by a video film and records. Similarly, the present world is, so to say, a big 'studio' of God. Whatever a man does or says or even thinks, everything is being recorded at every moment. And when the time comes, this world will repeat everybody's story in such a way that not a thing, great or small, will be left out. There is a story relating to this chapter in which there is a great lesson.

It is said that once a man came to the Prophet and after some discussion, he accepted the Prophet's faith. Then the Prophet said to him: "Stay with Ali ibn Abu Talib [one of the Prophet's Companions] for your further training."

A few days later, the Prophet asked Ali ibn Abu Talib about the man who had come to him. He replied that he had stayed with him for a while and then he had gone away, and that now he had no knowledge of his whereabouts.

The Prophet announced, "Anyone who meets this man, bring him to me." After a few days the Prophet was able to meet him again. The Prophet said to him, "I asked you to stay with Ali ibn Abu Talib for your further training. Then why did you leave Ali?" He replied, "You asked me to take training from him and I did so and then I went away."

Replying to a further question, he said that Ali had taught him chapter *Al Zalzalah* of the Quran, which says: "Whoever has done the smallest bit of good will see it; while whoever has done the smallest bit of evil will see it." (99: 7-8)

Quoting these verses of the Quran, the man said that from these verses, he had found the complete message; so there was no need to stay on any longer with Ali. The Prophet asked: "How did you find the complete message in these verses?" He replied: "These verses tell us that man is accountable to God and every deed of man, big or small, will be evaluated by God. Then he will be rewarded for good deeds and will be punished for bad deeds. Now I always keep this in mind. I always do what is right and I always refrain from what is wrong."

***On Judgement Day,
whoever has done
the smallest bit of
good will see it; while
whoever has done
the smallest bit of
evil will see it.***

This story explains very beautifully how the Quran develops a self-correcting mechanism in each human being. The Quran wants everyone to be on their guard all the time. This concept is bound to make everyone conduct themselves properly. It is the basis of character building system.

This concept inculcates a very strong incentive to always behave well and to refrain from bad behaviour in every aspect of life. This incentive works not only in public life but in private life as well. □



Idle Mind

*When one has no work to occupy oneself,
one falls prey to morbid brooding.*

DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

Path Towards Intellectual Development

EVELYN BEATRICE HALL (1868-1956) was an English writer. In her book, *The Friends of Voltaire*, Hall wrote, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to death your right to say it". Though Hall said this as an illustration of Voltaire's beliefs, this quotation is often misattributed to Voltaire himself.

The concept of freedom of opinion was born in the era of democracy. But now, it is a universal norm which has a general acceptance world over.

Before the advent of this concept, the world had not seen significant development in any field. Science and technology for instance were in a primitive state. The ushering in of this concept led to an era of technological and industrial revolution, which culminated in the present-day modern civilization.

Freedom of opinion is another name for collective thinking. In earlier times, thinking was the monopoly of a privileged few and the art of thinking was in its premature stages. Due to this monopoly, the art of thinking did not progress. But when thinking gained freedom, an era of advancement and innovation began. This was because every individual could now share one's ideas with others without any reservation. Any person could engage in an open discussion with any other individual, without any kind of fear.

Lending a patient audience to a dissenting opinion is equivalent to enriching one's own thought process. This habit inculcates broad-mindedness and boosts creativity.

As a result of this openness, for the first time in history, dissent became an undeniable right of every individual; exchange of ideas began in a free manner and eventually it led to a "thought explosion" in the world. Such a culture was ushered in the world where

everyone began to say freely what one had to say and others began to listen to it without any bias.

The thought revolution was perhaps the biggest revolution in history which significantly changed our world and raised it to a different level of development.

In earlier times, the world stood for intellectual intolerance, the world today stands for intellectual tolerance. The biggest advantage of

this development is that one person dispassionately listens to what the other person has to say because he knows that listening is not tantamount to acceptance.

Lending a patient audience to a dissenting opinion is equivalent to enriching one's own thought process. This habit inculcates broadmindedness and boosts creativity. In the sense of intellectual development, it makes man, a superman! His mind becomes like a flowing river which never gets stagnant because of influx of fresh thoughts. Such a mind constantly renews its thinking process and keeps on developing! It may become old physically but it never succumbs to the process of ageing in the intellectual sense—the thoughts always remain young and fresh!

It may seem difficult to listen to a dissenting opinion when one is not in agreement with it. But one who can develop this intellectual skill shall certainly, emerge as an intellectual giant.

It may seem difficult to listen to a dissenting opinion when one is not in agreement with it. But one who can develop this intellectual skill shall certainly, after going through this process, emerge as an intellectual giant! □



Team Work

Team work requires sacrifice. Be patient with one another, put other's needs before your own, think of the good of others rather than what you desire.

SPEAKING OF GOD TODAY

Man's Greatest Need

THE sun, one of God's creations, is an eternal reality. Vital to all forms of life, its importance has never been underestimated nor will it ever be in future. Then God who is the Creator of sun and all other objects, is, of necessity, deserving of a far higher degree of recognition, without the slightest diminution in His importance. God's relevance to man and the universe is eternal in nature.

Nature is a creation of God, and as such is a divine mirror. It serves, therefore, as a reflection of divine attributes. In ancient times, man's knowledge of nature was very limited. It was, therefore, not possible for the common man to have profound conception of God. In modern times, the position is quite different. The known facts about natural phenomena have increased exponentially, and with the spread of education man has far greater access to them than was ever hitherto possible. That is why today the possibility of the intellectual realization of God has greatly increased. A philosopher once aptly summed up this changed state of affairs with the observation: "a smattering of knowledge turns people away from God: much of it brings them back to Him."

The only factor that can be effective in ensuring peace between human beings is the universal acknowledgement of the concept of a Superior God—a God who is held to be great by all and to whom all surrender in equal measure.

It is the same point which was expressed 1400 years ago in the form of a prophecy in the Quran:

"We will show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the truth." (41: 53)

This prediction has been entirely fulfilled in modern times. It has been demonstrated by the scientific revolution of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The discovery of facts today by scientific research is akin to removing the veil of ignorance which prevented mankind from seeing the face of God. This has been expressed by a scientist in these words:

"Nature and science speak about God."

The world discovered by science is so unique that it cannot be explained without the acceptance of God. In former times, people used to ask,

“If God created the universe, who created God?” But questions such as these have now become meaningless, because they are irrelevant. In view of the new scientific findings it has become possible for us to assert that, in this world, the option is not between the universe with God and the universe without God. The real option is between the universe with God, and no universe at all.

As we cannot refute the existence of the universe, we cannot refute the existence of God as well. It has to be conceded that the concept of God is linked with the universe exactly as the concept of an engineer is linked with the concept of a great machine. If we believe in the existence of the machine, we shall inevitably have to believe in the engineer who created it. Exactly the same applies in the metaphysical sense, to God and the universe.

God is a reality, albeit invisible. He does not come under our direct observation and experience. Hence His existence can be proved only by inferential or indirect argument. For direct argument in this case is not possible.

In ancient times it was held that the subject of God was a matter of dogma, pertaining only to accepted creeds. Therefore it was a topic neither for academic debate nor for logical, scientific analysis. In modern times, however, the situation has totally changed. Scientific discoveries have shown that the atom is not a material entity at all but as waves of electrons, waves which were invisible. We could not observe the electrons themselves, but only their indirect effects.

***The world discovered
by science is so
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Advances in human knowledge of the material world brought about a number of changes, one of these being a revision of the principles of the science of logic. In the age of Newton, only direct argument was held to be valid in logic. But in the new age ushered in by Einstein, it came to be established that indirect argument or inferential argument was logically as acceptable as direct argument.

The objections raised by atheists to the holding of religious beliefs seemed to carry any weight only so long as human knowledge was confined to the level of the macro-world. But when human knowledge, making a great leap forward, made its entry into the micro-world, atheistic suppositions were totally demolished. It was because, unlike the macro-world, the micro-world was quite unobservable. Now a whole

range of realities had come within the scope of man's knowledge which were neither observable nor measurable. Therefore, the only kind of argument which was applicable to them was the indirect argument.

As a result of this academic revolution, the science of logic witnessed a great change. With the admission that indirect or inferential argument was logically as valid as direct argument, it became possible for the concept of God to be proved by exactly the same kind of reasoning as is applied in the various branches of science.

One of the ineluctable features of this world is its uncertainty. That is why every individual, young or old, rich or poor, finds oneself helpless at one time or another in the face of the circumstantial and environmental factors which are pitted against him. This uncertainty has not decreased, but has rather increased in the wake of modern revolutions. That is why the unrest found in the peoples of ancient times is greatly on the rise today. It is significant too that, as compared with the past, the number of suicides is greatly on the increase.

To be able to stand fast in this world, every person requires a concept which, at all times and in all places, will be an unending source of hope and confidence to him. Such an eternal concept cannot be other than that of God. Indeed, since ancient time, the only solution for man has been to have faith in an all-powerful Supreme Being. Throughout the ages this has served as a fountainhead of courage and strength for millions of human beings, and will remain so for people in all ages.

The real option is between the universe with God, and no universe at all. As we cannot refute the existence of the universe, we cannot refute the existence of God as well.

The greatest and most basic social requirement of mankind is peace. This is vital for any kind of human progress, for without peace no viable social structures can gain in place. So far as human beings are concerned they all appear to be equal. And it is a fact that peace is the most difficult to establish among equals. For the establishment of peace in society, therefore, an Agent is required who has a status immeasurably superior to that of human beings—in effect, a supreme being.

A Being of this kind—a grand regulator of human affairs—can only be God. The only factor, indeed, that can be effective in ensuring peace between human beings is the universal acknowledgement of the concept of a Superior God—a God who is held to be great by all and to whom all surrender in equal measure. As the old adage has it.

“Peace, thy name is God.”

The importance of God is as great for the individual as it is for the whole of society. No part of our individual or social life is complete without God. Undoubtedly the concept of God is as relevant today as it was in ancient time, for God is man’s greatest asset. □

Nature is a creation of God, and as such is a divine mirror. It serves, therefore, as a reflection of divine attributes.



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HOW TO BE HAPPY

Intellectual Satisfaction

EVERYONE wants to be happy. But no one seems to obtain the sort of happiness one wants. The ideal happiness that people look for eludes them. In this regard, Islam adopts a natural principle. The Quran expresses this in the following words: "Surely in the remembrance of God hearts can find comfort." (13: 28)

In other words, the Quran distinguishes between two things—physical pleasure, on the one hand, and intellectual satisfaction, on the other. In accordance with God's Creation Plan, physical pleasures can be had in their perfect sense only in Paradise. In this world, in contrast, what can be had is intellectual satisfaction, which every human being is capable of.

Intellectual satisfaction means discovering the appropriate explanation for every situation. For instance, you are heading to the railway station

With regard to physical pleasures, remain content with what you have received while leaving what you have not received to the Hereafter.

to catch a train, and when you get there, you discover that the train is two hours late. If you do not know the reason for the delay, you will be anxious. But if you get to know the reason, you will be set at ease and be at peace and will calmly wait for the train to arrive.

The Creator has made this world in order to test us and for rewarding us in the Hereafter. That is why in this world, no one can obtain physical pleasures in the fullest sense. But it is possible that by finding out the reason for the situations one is faced with, one can obtain

intellectual satisfaction or peace of mind. This, according to Islam, is the principle for happiness.

With regard to physical pleasures, remain content with what you have received while leaving what you have not received to the Hereafter. In this way, your mind will be freed, and, comprehending the reasons for the situations that you are faced with in the right way, you will obtain peace of mind. According to God's Creation Plan, this alone is a practicable method to obtain happiness. □



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



PURIFICATION THROUGH ILLNESS

ACCORDING to a *Hadith* in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, once, a man fell sick and the Prophet went to visit him. When he got there, the Prophet said: "Don't worry, God willing, it will be a means of purification."

Now, this does not mean that when someone falls sick, his sins are washed away through some mysterious process and that he is automatically purified. Rather, it is something known that happens with a believer. If you are not sick and your body is in good health, you develop, consciously or otherwise, a feeling of pride and a sense of self-sufficiency. In such a situation, feelings of helplessness are absent and a person can be insensitive.

In contrast to this, when a believer falls sick, he discovers his helplessness. It cultivates the virtues of kindness and compassion in him, and he experiences what it means to be a servant of God.

In this way, illness serves to distance the believer from other things and takes him closer to God. He turns his attention to God. He begins to remember God. He prays to God and beseeches Him. Sickness becomes a means for him to come near to God.

When a believer falls sick, he discovers his helplessness. It cultivates the virtues of kindness and compassion in him, and he experiences what it means to be a servant of God.

On the face of it, illness is an undesirable thing. But if you have a proper way of looking at it your bodily illness will become a means for your spiritual health.

In this world, what is of real significance is intellectual awakening. An awakened mind alone is capable of drawing lessons from every event. And the biggest trigger for awakening the mind is just one—and that is, difficult conditions. □

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REVERSE PUBLICITY

Focus on Results

ABDULLAH & Co. Ltd. was a cigarette company that was started in London in 1902. One of its cigarette brands was called Abdulla, and it was very popular. How it became so famous is a very interesting story. Once, some people associated with the company met the famous British writer George Bernard Shaw (died 1950) and requested him to write something about their cigarette. Shaw replied saying that he was against smoking. And so, how, he asked, could he heed their request? The men said to him to write precisely that! Shaw got angry. In his anger, he picked up a piece of paper and on it he wrote:

Don't smoke, even Abdulla.

The company folks published these words of Shaw in the newspaper! When people read this, it led to a soaring in the popularity and sales of Abdulla cigarettes! People started flocking to shops selling the cigarette, so much that for a time it became the largest-selling brand, raking in for the company huge profits.

The lesson one can draw from this is that if the result of what you say will turn out to be just the opposite of what you intend, it is better that you stay quiet. Sometimes, you can attain your goal in a much better way by remaining silent than by speaking. The main thing is to achieve your goal, rather than to speak.

In this world, just as it is necessary sometimes to speak, it is also sometimes necessary to remain silent. It is a test of one's wisdom to know when one should speak and when one should not. One should gauge the situation, and, accordingly, should act, keeping in mind the consequences. Only that action is proper that produces the proper results. □

Just as it is necessary sometimes to speak, it is also sometimes necessary to remain silent. It is a test of one's wisdom to know when one should speak and when one should not.

Negativity

Negativity is to follow impulse rather than truth.

HARMONIOUS MARRIED LIFE

Blessing in Disguise

A believing man should not be displeased with a believing woman; if he dislikes one of her characteristics, he will be pleased with another. (Sahih Muslim)

THIS *Hadith* attributed to the Prophet and contained in the Sahih Muslim provides comprehensive advice with regard to marital relations. It says that a believing man should not be displeased with a believing woman; if he dislikes one of her characteristics, she would have another characteristic that he would like.

It is a fact of life that nobody, possesses every conceivable virtue. This is how nature is: you may have some wonderful qualities, but you may lack some other good qualities. But it is a very common human tendency to see and focus more on what we think are the negative qualities in others. Very often, we ignore or are blind to their positive qualities. This is a devastating way to think, though. It is a sure recipe

It is the fault of our own thinking that we consider somebody inferior and somebody else superior. If people realize this, their lives will become filled with gratitude.

for ruining our relationships. If instead of thinking this way we focus on the positive qualities in others and ignore their negative qualities, our relations with them would automatically become harmonious. If this is applied to marital relations, every husband would come to think of his wife as the best possible life-partner, and vice versa.

God has not made anyone inferior or superior. The fact is that every one is unique as regards their creation. It is the fault of our own thinking that we consider somebody inferior and somebody else superior. If people realize this, their lives will become filled with gratitude. No longer will they complain or feel deprived. And they will be able to lead more meaningful lives. □



Caution And Patience

In prosperity caution in adversity patience.

THE TRUE SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Mankind as One Family

ACCORDING to a news report in The Times of India on July 12, 2016 at least three youths from Kerala are suspected to have joined the Islamic State (IS). In a voice message to his family, one of the youths said that they had reached '*Dar al-Islam*' from '*Dar al-Kufr*', meaning that they gone to the land of Islam from the land of disbelievers.

The terms '*Dar al-Kufr*' (Land of Disbelievers) and '*Dar al-Islam*' (Land of Islam) are not Islamic terms: both are bidah, or innovation. These terms were invented in the later history of Islam by certain jurists. The Prophet of Islam and his Companions never used such phrases to refer to people or places.

This kind of terminology promotes the 'we and they' concept, which leads to hatred and other evils. Islam believes in the human family concept. Islam is a peaceful mission, one that cannot afford to foster a separatist thinking in its followers.

If a person reads the Quran from the beginning to the end, he will find that it repeatedly uses this form of address: 'O people' or 'O mankind'. According to this, the whole world is '*Dar al-Insan*' or the land of human beings. When the Prophet of Islam was in Madinah, nearly half of the population of the city consisted of Jews. Once when he was in Madinah, the Prophet stood up in respect of a Jew's funeral procession. When one of his Companions indicated to him that the person was a Jew and not a Muslim, the Prophet replied: "Was he not a human being?"

The Prophet of Islam began his mission in 610 CE in Makkah. At that time, the overwhelming majority of the citizens there were polytheists. Thus the Makkah of that time, according to the above terminology, was a 'land of disbelievers', however, the Prophet never referred to ancient Makkah as '*Dar al-Kufr*'.

When the Prophet migrated to Madinah, the majority of its inhabitants embraced Islam, making the city a 'land of Islam'. But the Prophet never called Madinah '*Dar al-Islam*'. Such terms are undoubtedly an innovation in Islam. According to a tradition of the Prophet, 'One who innovates something in our religion which is not part of it, then that will be rejected.' (*Bukhari*)

Islam is a peaceful mission, one that cannot afford to foster a separatist thinking in its followers.

If the world is considered '*Dar al-Insan*', Land of human beings then there will be normal relations between all people. On the contrary, if we use the words '*Dar al-Kufr*' or '*Dar al-Islam*', then separatist tendencies will find place: people would consider a particular area as theirs and an area that does not belong to them as that of others. This will breed separatism and intolerance, which may sometimes even culminate into violence.

Islam is a mission of Tawhid (Monotheism). It is the duty of Muslims to peacefully convey to people the message of God. Such a mission can be successful only in an atmosphere of peace and brotherhood. The cause of this mission can be furthered only when there is social harmony, and peace. Social disharmony can only serve to jeopardize the mission of conveying the message. This is why it is obligatory for Muslims to unilaterally maintain social harmony at all costs.

***According to Islam,
a person should
consider one's
country of birth as
one's homeland.***

To call a country '*Dar al-Kufr*' and to settle in another country believing that it is '*Dar al-Islam*' is quite against the spirit of Islam. According to Islam, a person should consider one's country of birth as one's homeland. One

should have love in one's heart for the land where one was born and raised. Also, one must be friendly in one's behaviour towards all the people. This is the true spirit of Islam. □



Do Not Lose Heart

Every evening is followed by a new morning. The world is full of potentials and possibilities. If you lose one opportunity, you can gain another. If you miss one door, another opens for you. If a certain plan fails, one can always make new plans and move on.

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.



RADICALIZATION OF MUSLIM YOUTH

PRESENT-DAY Muslim militancy derives neither from the Quran nor the *Sunnah*. It is basically a product of the Muslim media—although this has come about unintentionally. The Muslim media since its inception to this day have been a vehicle for the launching of protests. And it is this protesting nature of the Muslim media that has formed the mindset of present-day Muslims. Muslim militancy and suicide bombing are mainly the consequence of this Muslim media.

The printing press was popularized in the Muslim world in the eighteenth century. Napoleon Bonaparte of France (1769–1821) was the first to introduce the printing press to Egypt when he invaded the country in 1798. That is to say, the printing press was brought to the Muslim world by the European colonial powers. It was a coincidence that the printing press came to the Muslim world at a time when they were witnessing colonial expansion in their lands.

Every day there was news of western powers encroaching upon the Muslim world, in one way or another. For example, in 1771 the Russian fleet totally destroyed the Ottoman Navy in the Mediterranean Sea during the Russo-Turkish War (1768-74). Sultan Tipu of Mysore was killed fighting the British army in 1799. The Mughal dynasty of India faced a crushing defeat at the hands of the British East India Company in 1857. The Italo-Turkish war between the Ottoman Empire

The Muslim militancy of the present age is based neither on reason nor on any teaching of Islam. It is entirely the upshot of the Muslim community's anger, disillusionment and negative thinking.

and the Kingdom of Italy led to the capture by Italy of the Ottoman province of Tripolitania in 1912. Such events were bound to lead to repercussions in the Muslim community, which was further reflected in the Muslim press.

The Muslim world has been beset by such incidents from the eighteenth century right up to this day, and these events have been reported with exaggeration in the Muslim press.

In this way, the Muslim press has developed into a kind of protesting journalism. Now the electronic media is being used by Muslims towards the same end.

It is media of this kind that has created the Muslim mindset of the present day. The kind of thinking that characterizes Muslims in our times is not based on Islamic teachings, but stems rather from the Muslim media which invariably speaks the language of protests and complaints.

Muslims today have coined a new term, Islamophobia. This means that the West has wrongly come to regard Islam as danger to non-Muslims. This term would be better termed as 'Muslimophobia'.

It is this pattern adopted by the Muslim media which has made Muslims negative. The Muslim community has therefore become an angry one and it is now directing its anger at other communities. When they saw that their gun culture was not producing the required results, they began, on account of their increasing anger, to indulge in suicide bombing in order to destabilize their supposed enemies.

The Muslim militancy of the present age is based neither on reason nor on any teaching of Islam. It is entirely the upshot of the Muslim community's anger, disillusionment and negative thinking.

It is said that the greatest menace of present times is the radicalization of Muslim youths. But the question is: What is the source of this radicalization? The Quran and the *Sunnah* are certainly not the ideological sources of this radicalization. The source of this culture is the use by Muslims of internet or social media as an extended form of Muslim media. Muslims have easy access to the international network—the internet, and are using it on a vast scale. Thus they have filled their websites on the internet with information showing Muslims as an imperilled community. This outreach of the social media is there in everyone's pocket in the form of mobile phones.

It is this website or internet culture that has basically contributed to the radicalization of today's Muslim youth. To save young Muslims from this negative culture, an extensive campaign is required to awaken Muslim minds in such a way that they may analyze information on websites on their own and develop the ability to differentiate between truth and falsehood.

This kind of violence cannot be eliminated through counter violence, because any counter-violence will only further aggravate the Muslims' anger. It is only due to this aggravated anger that they have taken to suicide bombing.

In the modern age, almost the entire Muslim community has started to lodge protests and complaints. Because of this mindset of theirs, Muslims have become receptive to negativity and not to positivity. Under the influence of this mindset Muslims tend to treat positive news with suspicion. All they know is that others are their enemies; they are unable to view people as creations of God. They only look at the negative aspect of events and fail to take account of their positive aspects.

Muslims today have coined a new term, that is, Islamophobia. This means that the West has wrongly come to regard Islam as danger to non-Muslims. This, however, is not actually the case. This term would be more apt with a slight change, it should be termed as 'Muslimophobia'.

Muslims have adopted the culture of violence in the name of Islam. In this sense the West is right to consider Muslims to be dangerous. Yet Islam, in itself is a universal message to mankind. But the present Muslims, due to their wrong interpretation of their own religion, have misrepresented Islam as a religion of violence.

Muslims have adopted the culture of violence in the name of Islam. In this sense the West is right to consider Muslims to be dangerous.

Muslimophobia addresses Muslims rather than anyone else. It is telling Muslims to abandon the wrong interpretation of Islam and shun the gun and bomb culture, so that people may be saved from developing misunderstandings about Islam. In this way, people will be able to have a positive understanding of the religion of Islam.

In view of the present situation, the question is, where is the silver lining? In the modern age Muslim reformers should focus on the

Muslim youth. In his early, formative years, a person is relatively free from conditioning and is thus in a position to view things objectively and examine events in an unbiased manner. Our efforts should begin by trying to inculcate positive thinking in Muslims while they are still very young.

The new generation of Muslims is our hope, especially those who are availing of modern education. Modern education is helping in their deconditioning. They are able to see the world in a more objective way and are developing the ability to understand things in a more realistic manner. It is these Muslim youths who are our hope for the future.

Muslim reformers should focus on the Muslim youth. Our efforts should begin by trying to inculcate positive thinking in Muslims while they are still very young.

The Muslim militancy of the present age is based neither on reason nor on any teaching of Islam. It is entirely the upshot of the Muslim community's anger, disillusionment and negative thinking. □



Right Goal

A person who sets the right goal for himself and does continuous effort for this goal will surely reach his destination.

THE GREATEST JOY

Eternal Happiness

"God will say to the people of Paradise, 'O people of Paradise!' They will say, 'Labbayk, O our Lord, , and all the good is in Your Hands!' God will say, 'Are you satisfied?' They will say, 'Why shouldn't we be satisfied, O our Lord, as You have given us what You have not given to any of Your created beings?' God will say, 'Shall I not give you something better than that?' They will say, 'O our Lord! What else could be better than this?' He will say, 'I bestow My Pleasure on you and will never be angry with you ever after.' – Prophet of Islam (Sahih Bukhari)

PARADISE is, undoubtedly, the collection of all blessings. It is the place where every desire and aspiration of human beings will be completely fulfilled. Those who are blessed with entry into Paradise will find that they have obtained all their joys in their true sense. But still, they will be faced with an apprehension that since they have received admission into Paradise as a gift from God and they are not its creators, if God so wills, He can take away this blessing from them.

The above-cited *Hadith* is the answer to this doubt. When God Himself declares that He is eternally pleased with those who have been admitted into Paradise, it would mean that Paradise has now become their eternal home and that it will never be taken away from them.

Undoubtedly, this will be the greatest joy that the inhabitants of Paradise will experience. □

When God Himself declares that He is eternally pleased with those who have been admitted into Paradise, it would mean that Paradise has become their eternal home and that it will never be taken away from them.



Failure

Failure is a blessing, it makes one more sincere and mature.

WHO IS IN LOSS?

Importance of Time

Time is a witness, that man is surely in a state of loss, except for those who believe and do good deeds and exhort one another to hold fast to the Truth, and who exhort one another to steadfastness.

(THE QURAN 103: 1-3)

AL-ASR (The Time) is the one hundred and third chapter of the Quran. In this chapter the Quran refers to time. What is time? Time is a passing phenomenon; it is always in a state of travel, from present to future, from morning to evening, from today to tomorrow. Time is beyond our control, we can never stop time.

In making this reference, the Quran gives a very important lesson, one which is important for all. This lesson is: take time as an opportunity. Avail of time before it passes away forever. If we miss the train of time, we will never be able to catch it again.

Al-Razi, one of the commentators of the Quran, says: "I was pondering over the meaning of this Quranic verse while I was in Baghdad. Why does the Quran say that time is a witness for man? Then I heard the voice of an ice vendor. He was calling out to people, 'O people, purchase my goods before they melt away and vanish.' The phenomenon of ice successfully explains this Quranic verse. Everyone's life is like a melting block of ice. Everyone is constantly losing time. When we rise in the morning, we have lost the night, to which we cannot return again. As evening nears we have lost the day. By these verses, the Quran warns every human being to avail of time. We should avail of the opportunities of the day that we will not get during the night, and avail of the opportunities of the night that we will not get during the day.

Take time as an opportunity. Avail of time before it passes away forever. If we miss the train of time, we will never be able to catch it again.

In other words, with these verses the Quran tells us the importance of time management. Time management is a must for all of us. We have a very short time here on this earth. In only a few years' time, we will face death. We should undertake a serious planning of our time in order to avail properly of our pre-death period. We have only two options before us, either to avail of the time wisely or face failure forever. □

THE ETHICS OF A BELIEVER

Unilateral Good Character

IT has been narrated on the authority of Anas ibn Malik that at the moment when the Prophet was wounded at the Battle of Uhud, he uttered these words: "How will those people attain salvation who inflict pain on their Prophet?" In response to this, God revealed the following verse: "You have no say in this affair." (3: 128)

This *Hadith* teaches us about the ethics of a believer, or of one who calls others to God. A believer must adopt unilateral ethics. That is, he must not complain about the actions of others. He must completely rise above complaint and protest and be free from the psyche of reaction.

A believer is a well wisher of mankind in the truest sense of the word. It is this spirit of well-wishing that produces in the believer the virtues that make him a completely non-complaining person. This quality of unilateral ethics is indispensable for him. If he lacks this character, he can never engage in the work of calling people to God.

The believer does his work for God's sake. He rests his hope for reward in God alone. No matter how others might behave, the believer relates every experience to God. If he falls prey to a psyche of reaction and begins to quarrel and clash with others, his efforts would not be desirable to God. It is God's desire that through His message, people are made aware of the realities of life so that they are in no position to say in the Hereafter that they were unaware of the truth. The purpose of the unilateral ethics of a believer is that others should no longer have any excuse for turning away from the Truth and that in the Hereafter, the manner in which man is dealt with would be a perfectly legitimate one in every respect. □

It is God's desire that through His message, people are made aware of the realities of life so that they are in no position to say in the Hereafter that they were unaware.



THE BEST STORY

Prophetic Method

IN chapter twelve, the Quran narrates a story, which it calls ‘the best of stories’. It is about the Prophet Joseph, who lived in Palestine with his father and stepbrothers. When Joseph was in his teens, his stepbrothers became jealous of him. They contrived to throw him into a dry well situated in a forest. But God came to his rescue—a caravan spotted him in the well and pulled him out. Later, he was sold as a slave in an Egyptian market. That was how he travelled from Palestine to Egypt.

Luckily his master was a courtier of the Egyptian king. As for his religion, the king was a polytheist, while Joseph, who belonged to the family of Abraham, was a believer in the oneness of God. After some years, when Joseph reached the age of maturity, he came in contact with the King. The King, greatly impressed by his personality and wisdom, offered him a high office in his government. In present terms, this was the equivalent of being the Minister for Agriculture. According to the Biblical narration, the Egyptian king said: “You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.”

(Genesis 42: 40)

Joseph accepted this offer and successfully managed the agricultural affairs of the land at a time when there was a severe drought in Egypt and the surrounding areas. People became so happy that they accepted him as their hero. After narrating this story, the

Quran says: “God does not waste the reward of those who do good, who are righteous and steadfast.” (12: 90)

What qualities did Joseph possess which elevated him to this high status? After reading his story, as given in the Quran, we can summarize these qualities:

Joseph’s stepbrothers hatched an evil plot against him which was intended to cause his death. But Joseph did not harbour any hatred or feelings of revenge towards them. Instead, he forgave them and gave them a warm welcome in Egypt as mentioned in the Quran.

Do not stand against the rulers and confront them in the political field. Accept their position and avail of the opportunities that arise in other non-political spheres.

When in Egypt, he never created any problems for his master or the king. The King of Egypt did not enforce his religion on others. Prophet Joseph did not clash with the polytheists in Egypt at that time. Following the principle of avoidance of conflict, he availed of the opportunity given to him by the Egyptian ruler. He accepted the political position of the king and worked under him governing the ministry of agriculture for a long period, serving the people of his country and of the other countries around the area.

Each prophet in the Quran has a different lesson for mankind. The 'deen' (religion) that the prophets are given are the same. But they are given different situations due to which they react giving us different lessons. The Quran says: 'Follow the ways of the previous prophets.'

The lesson from Prophet Joseph's example however is: Do not stand against the rulers and confront them in the political field. Accept their position and avail of the opportunities that arise in other non-political spheres.

The Quran refers to this story of Joseph as 'the best story'. Why does the Quran refer to this story as 'the best story'? In Chapter Joseph (*Yusuf*), you will not find any reference to any joyous moments of Prophet Joseph's life that might make his story 'the best story'. However, you will surely find excellent examples for emulation in Prophet Joseph's personal, social and political life. In this respect, Chapter Joseph in the Quran can be considered as 'the best story' in terms of the methodology and not just as a story. □

You will surely find excellent examples for emulation in Prophet Joseph's personal, social and political life.



A Believer

A believer is one who is not beguiled by the outward splendour of worldly things.

AN ATTRIBUTE OF A PERSON OF FAITH

God-consciousness

The example of a believer is that of a fresh green plant, the leaves of which move in whichever direction the wind blows them, and when the wind becomes still, it stands upright. Such is the similitude of the believer: he constantly faces difficult and testing situations. While the example of one who does not believe is that of a pine tree, which remains unmoved and static until God cuts it down when He wills. – Prophet of Islam (Sahih Bukhari)

USING the simile of a plant, this *Hadith* talks about a particular characteristic of a person of faith—that of humility or modesty. A person with deep faith, would definitely also be a humble person. Faith and humility can never be separated from each other. A person of faith is not proud and arrogant like a dried-up stick. Rather, he is flexible, like a soft plant. If he does something wrong, he admits his mistake at once. In his dealings with others, he is always gentle. If he develops differences with someone, he is at once ready to reconcile on a unilateral basis. In the event of a dispute with another person, he willingly agrees to hand over his rights to the other in order that the issue does not escalate and go out of hand.

A person of faith is not proud and arrogant like a driedup stick. Rather, he is flexible, like a soft plant.

If a person behaves arrogantly with others, it is because he considers the issue as involving a person just like himself—a fellow human being. This is what makes him arrogant in his behaviour. But the matter is very different in

the case of a person of faith, who sees every issue as involving God. This puts an end to any arrogance in him. You can think you are bigger than another human being, but the fact is that no human being is bigger or more powerful than God. On account of this difference, when it comes to two human beings, one of them might appear to be smaller and the other bigger. But when it comes to an issue about God and man, all human beings, without exception, have exactly the same status. In this case, God alone is greatest and all mankind being His creation has to be modest and humble before the Creator. □



SUCCESS VERSUS EXPERIENCE

Take Failure as Experience

ONE common instance of the dichotomy in people's thinking is their placing of success and failure at opposite poles. Generally speaking, people think that they have either won or they have lost out in life. They do not consider any other alternative.

But if life's eventualities were looked at through the eyes of wisdom, we would find that the dichotomy of success versus failure is not realistic. The more realistic and wiser categorization of meaningful events in human life is mentioned in the title of this article, that is, 'success versus experience'.

From the viewpoint of the common man, success means achieving his target, while failure means, having lacked the ability or the drive to do so. But this is not the whole story. What should happen—and very often does happen—is when a man fails to achieve his target, his failure should trigger a very powerful thinking process which examines the whole situation afresh and then his own nature should thrust him into making every effort to turn his failure into success.

Once this train of thought has been set in motion, consciously or unconsciously, he should accept the possibility of having a second chance. Once he begins to see the matter in a new light, he will come to the conclusion that if he has failed to capitalize on the first chance, it just doesn't matter, a second chance still awaits him. He will realize that, by careful re-planning, he can avail of that second chance.

One notable example of this is the course adopted by the sixteenth US president, Abraham Lincoln. When he entered politics, he took part in the presidential elections. Then, for a variety of reasons, he lost in the different elections no less than eight times. Yet he didn't lose hope and finally won the elections at the ninth attempt, becoming America's sixteenth president.

The fact is that you should not take defeat as something final. You should take defeat as experience. By doing so, you will be stimulated to reappraise the situation and come up with fresh solutions. In the light of past experiences, you will be able to do better planning and will seek opportunities to avail of a second chance. Finally, by better planning, you will be able to convert your defeat into success.

Never take defeat as an ultimate disaster. Take defeat as experience and then you will never become the victim of frustration. □

ON THE DOORSTEP OF DEATH

Every Moment

MAN thinks that he is living a life, but the truth is that every one stands on the door of death. When the time of death is not established, every moment is a moment of death. Every step of man is a step towards death. For every one, life is only an experience of today, not of tomorrow; today is the day for living and tomorrow, the day of death.

Death is a journey from a known world into an unknown world. Every day man undergoes various types of small and large journeys, domestic and international, by land, sea and by air. All these journeys are undertaken from a known place to a known destination. Man has been so accustomed to such type of journeys that he does not take them seriously.

When the time of death is not established, every moment is a moment of death. Every step of man is a step towards death.

But the journey of death is very much different. The journey of death takes one from a known place towards an unknown destination. Without doubt this is a crucial matter for everyone. But due to his conditioning, man does not appreciate the seriousness of this matter. He is so used to the journeys of the world that he is unable to consciously comprehend the magnitude of the journey of death. Death, to him sounds like some obscure information and not a soon upcoming event.

Man always thinks on the basis of his conditioning and mind-set. This is the reason for man's insensitivity towards death. To fully appreciate the seriousness of matter, man needs to come out of the shackles of his conditioning and then address the issue of death with a clear unbiased mind. Only then will it be possible for him to understand the reality of death, which is without doubt the most crucial issue that confronts him. □

Belief in God

Belief in God compels man to steadfastly adopt a proper attitude in all situations, privately as well as publicly.

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**

We made a covenant with Adam before you, but he forgot, and We found him lacking in constancy. When We said to the angels, 'Prostrate yourselves before Adam,' they all prostrated themselves, except for Satan, who refused, We said, 'Adam, [Satan] is an enemy to you and to your wife. Let him not turn you both out of Paradise and thus make you come to grief. (20: 115-117)

To adhere steadfastly to God's commandments, unwavering determination is essential. If a man is influenced by irrelevant factors, he will undoubtedly deviate from the path of God. In order to remain steadfastly on the path of God, it is not enough to know what His commandment is; it is also absolutely necessary to have the will to resist all that goes against His commandment, and not to let himself be influenced by it.

When God ordered that all should kneel down before Adam, the angels immediately dropped to their knees. But Satan did not do so. The reason for this difference in behaviour was that the angels treated this matter as pertaining to God, whereas Satan, on the contrary, saw it as the affair of a mere mortal. When an issue concerns God, man has no option but to bow to His wishes. But when it is treated as relating to a human being, the person in question will appraise the human being before him. If the latter is comparatively stronger, he will kneel down; otherwise he will refuse to kneel down, even if such an action be the demand of truth and justice.

'Here you shall not go hungry or be naked, you shall not thirst, nor feel the sun's heat.' But Satan whispered evil to him, saying, 'Adam, shall I lead you to the tree of immortality and to a kingdom that never declines?' They both ate the fruit of this tree, and so they became

conscious of their nakedness and began to cover themselves with the leaves of the Garden. Thus Adam disobeyed his Lord and fell into error. Then his Lord had mercy on him, accepted his repentance and guided him. (20: 118-122)

God kept Adam, with his spouse, in Paradise, where he was freely and amply provided with all the necessities of life—food, clothing, water and shelter. Adam was not required to do anything in return for these blessings, unlike in the present world where man has to earn all these things by his own hard labour.

In Paradise, the fruit of a certain tree was prohibited for Adam. But Satan came and described to him the eternal advantages of this fruit. Adam, influenced by what he said, ate it, then immediately felt that he was naked. This was symbolic of the fact that God had instantly withdrawn the guarantee of providing him with sustenance without his having to earn it by his own labour. Thereafter, on his supplication and repentance, he was pardoned. However, he was removed from a world where God's bounty had been freely given and sent to a world where he had to earn his living by the sweat of his brow. Such was the beginning of human existence on this earth.

God said, 'Go down, both of you, from here, as enemies to one another.' If there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance will not lose his way, nor will he come to grief, but whoever turns away from My reminder, will lead a straitened existence and on the Day of Judgement We shall raise him up blind and he will ask, 'Lord, why have You raised me up blind, while I possessed sight before?' God will say, 'Just as Our signs came to you and you ignored them, so will you on this Day be ignored.' Thus We shall reward the transgressor who denies the signs of his Lord. But the suffering of the life to come is more terrible and more lasting. (20: 123-127)

God settled Satan as well as Adam on the earth and gave due warning in the very beginning that clashes of interest between the two would go on till Doomsday. Satan would make every possible effort to mislead mankind, therefore, people should make it a point to treat him as their greatest enemy and try to stay far away from his inducements.

To give further guidance to man, God periodically sent him His messengers, or prophets, who instructed him in the reality of life in a language which was clearly intelligible to him. Now, the success or failure of man depends on his own acceptance or rejection of the Prophet's guidance. One who accepts this guidance will once again be ushered into the comfortable life of Paradise, whereas the life of one

who fails to accept it will be a very severe one, from which he will never be able to escape.

Those who turn away from God's guidance will be reduced in the Hereafter to blindness, being deprived of both the eyes. The reason for this is such people are given eyes in the world in order to be able to see and recognize God's signs. But they live in such a manner that, when they encounter God's signs, they fail to recognize them. Thus, they prove that, in spite of having eyes, they are really blind. So God will ask on that Day, what use it had been to give eyes to those who were determined to be blind. □

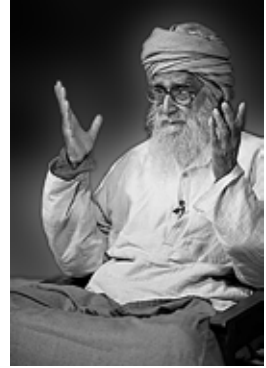


Good Speech

Most of our activities are related to speech in one way or another. Each one of us ought to cultivate the art of speaking that is positive and which creates a healthy atmosphere in the family, society and the nation. Good speech is the basis of nation building.

ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered



The issue of terrorism engaged in by self-styled Islamic groups seems to be becoming even more serious. Almost every day now there is a terrorist attack by such groups somewhere. Given this: What makes you continue to be hopeful—about peace, including and especially among Muslims and between Muslims and others?

My hopes are based on nature. I believe that radicalized Muslims are misguided. Muslims' case is that they consider their violent acts as Islam. This thinking of theirs is based on a 'jihadi' interpretation of Islam. In comparison to this, I present an interpretation of Islam based on dawah. Thousands of Muslims all over the world have corrected and reformed their thinking after reading my writings, because they found them in accordance with their inner nature. This phenomenon has created hope in me in that I believe that others too can similarly be changed along peaceful lines. I continually make an effort to change the minds of people. From past experience, I can say that when people's minds are addressed they abandon violence in favour of peace.

You continue to write on these issues with great passion. What drives you?

In 1967, I had started my mission of peace in New Delhi. At that time, a Delhi-based Muslim magazine wrote an article critical of me, bearing the title 'A Lonely Voice'. However, in the past 40 years my way of thinking has been adopted by thousands of people in India as well as abroad; these people have become part of my peace mission. This positive experience is my driving force. I am certain that a person can deny everything else, but he cannot deny his own nature. Thus those who, after reading my writings, discover the truth cannot afford to deny it any more. This fact has been proved true in the past and with God's help it will be proved correct in the future on a greater scale.

At your age and given how serious the situation today is, someone else might have given up all hope for a better, more peaceful world. He might have turned cynical and bitter. He might have lost all interest in these issues. He might have felt that trying to transform others and the world is pointless. But not you! What continues to inspire you to

be so engaged in seeking to promote peace and to counter extremism, including and, especially among Muslims?

My confidence is based on a verse of the Quran which says that a believer always has an option of one of the two benefits: the good of the Hereafter or the good of both the present world and the Hereafter (9: 52). As I have stated above, I am hopeful of both the good of this world and that of the Hereafter. In such a situation, I do not need to fall prey to frustration. I am hopeful of the good of the Hereafter because my mission is based on the Quran and *Sunnah*. As far as the good of this world is concerned, I am hopeful of it because many people have left their violent ways and have come to the path of peace after becoming familiar with the ideas laid down in the literature of Centre for Peace and Spirituality (CPS).

Do you think the problems that many Muslims today face is at least partly a result of their thinking about people of other faiths in such a demeaning manner?

The problems Muslims are facing today are a result of their own wrong planning, a planning that goes against nature.

The world in which we live is governed by a law, which may be called the divine law or the law of nature. Right planning is to plan in accordance with the law of nature. On the contrary, wrong planning is when one's planning is based on one's desires and does not take into consideration the law of nature.

For example, in the present age western nations have achieved dominance. Muslims considered this a threat for themselves and began to fight against these nations. They continued this struggle at the cost of great sacrifice to themselves. Everyone is aware that this step by Muslims yielded no result at all. The reason is that it was based on wrong planning.

The Quran states a law of international life in these words: 'Lord Sovereign of all sovereignty. You bestow sovereignty on whom You will and take it away from whom You please.' (3: 26) In the present age, Muslim empires, such as the Mughal and Ottoman empires, came to an end. This happened according to the international law mentioned in this Quranic verse. Muslims should have accepted it and re-planned the affairs of their community. Had Muslims done this, Muslim history of recent times would have surely been different.

There is great wisdom behind the above Quranic law regarding international life. That is, it helps in maintaining and continuing the process of development. Muslims, in their long period of rule, could not take the world beyond the agricultural age. When the European countries gained dominance, they helped the world enter the industrial age. It was now time for Muslims to understand new changes and draw benefit from them. However, because of their unawareness Muslims began to fight, leading to total failure. □



Love All

Love is the greatest human virtue. Where there is love, everything is in harmony, and where there is hate, all that is good remains in jeopardy. The fact is that difference is part of nature. It has rightly been said: "Nature abhors uniformity. This being so, differences will arise between individuals and groups. The only solution is to adopt "Love all" formula.

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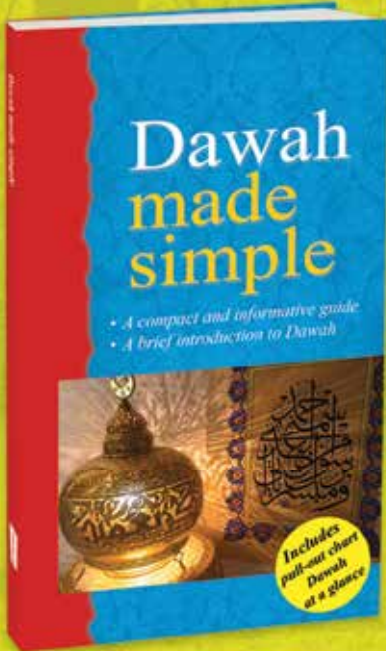
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