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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

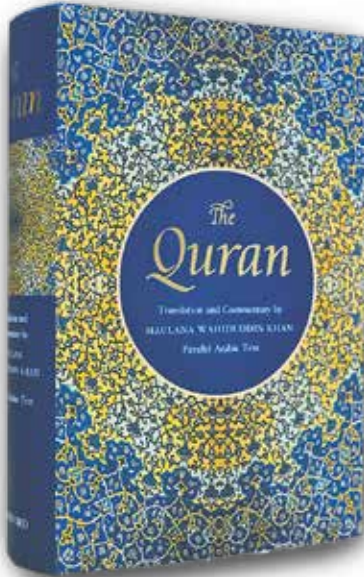


If you have opted for some position due to your interest,
do not try to justify it in terms of principles.

The Quran

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY
MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN
PARALLEL ARABIC TEXT

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



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

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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

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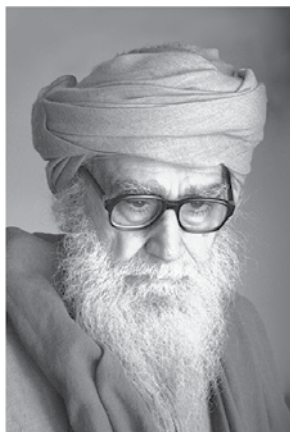
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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 recognised as one of its most influential Muslims¹. His books have been translated into sixteen languages and are part of university curricula in six countries. He is the founder of the Centre for Peace and Spirituality based in New Delhi.

SPIRITUALITY—A UNIVERSAL RELIGION

SPIRITUALITY is a universal religion. It can be divided into two phases—the pre-scientific and the post-scientific eras. In my view, spirituality of pre-scientific era was of a lower level. As with other disciplines, the scientific era facilitated the attainment of spirituality at a higher plane.

Past notions considered the human heart to be the core of spirituality. That is why man worked for thousands of years to attain spirituality by focusing on the heart. Meditation was considered the only way to attain spirituality by the spiritual masters.

Heart-oriented spirituality is meditation based and achieved by suppressing the thinking process of the mind. This spiritual practice of over five thousand years has not produced any creative work in the real sense, unlike the mind-based disciplines which have produced many creative personalities.

The secret of this failure of spirituality was revealed only after the emergence of modern science. Scientific research revealed for the first

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

time that the heart was only an organ for blood circulation. The human mind and not the heart is the centre of intellectual activity. All the spiritual masters continued to seek spirituality in the heart, whereas the truth is that the centre of spirituality exists in the mind.

The truth is that spirituality too is a function of the mind. Spirituality is a phenomenon of intellectual development. By applying the mind, one discovers that there is a non-material reality beyond material existence. This is the beginning of spirituality and with greater realisation of this higher reality one develops one's spiritual level. Spirituality is a conscious discovery, far removed from any vague type of feelings. Spirituality centered on the heart is based on meditation and leads to ecstasy. When ecstasy peaks, it suppresses the intellectual function of the mind. Feelings take hold and one is no longer guided by one's conscious mind.

Compared to this, spirituality based on the mind results in a conscious discovery of intellectual realisation, a thrilling experience. There can be no greater thrill at the conscious level. Even at its peak, ecstasy cannot take man beyond the confines of a limited world, whereas intellectual realisation knows no bounds.

Spirituality is a function of the mind. Spirituality is a phenomenon of intellectual development.

Heart-based spirituality led to an unscientific viewpoint regarding the understanding of God. As spiritualists focus on their heart in their meditations, they feel the boundaries gradually disappearing. They feel they have reached a world where there is an answer

to existence. They find this feeling of ecstasy very thrilling. They find they have reached a world where there is unity of existence; where the difference between the Creator and the created has disappeared.

This experience does not lead to intellectual discovery, but is one of a vague temporary feeling. Still on the basis of this vague feeling it came to be believed that there was a unity of existence at the higher level. This resulted in the theological belief of 'non-dualism'—the belief that God and man are the same existence, the claim that man is not separate from God, rather he is a part of God.

This concept has been described by a Sufi mystic in these words: *ana al haq*, that is, "I am the Truth." Without doubt this concept is irrational for the simple reason that the experience shows that man has none of the divine qualities. The truth is that man is the created, neither is he the creator nor a part of the Creator.

Spirituality is the highest intellectual achievement for a human being and can be attained only by developing the conscious mind.

According to my experience, the only rational concept of God is monotheism. It is based on the concept of dualism, that man and God are separate and with distinct identities. God is the Creator, man is the created.

There are two main sources of this spirituality. One is perusal in nature, the other is close affinity with God as a result of which one may receive inspirations from God.

This is the real basis of spirituality. Undoubtedly, spirituality is the highest intellectual achievement for a human being and can be attained only by developing the conscious mind. □

Maulana Wahiddudin Khan
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Golden Silence

When one is silent, one's focus is on the self rather than extraneous matters. One eschews superficiality and engages with deeper realities.

THE ROLE OF MUSLIMS IN DIASPORA

National Integration

THE total number of Muslims in the world today is 1.57 billion, of which 5 million reside in the United States. A large proportion lives in countries where they are minorities. These include countries where Muslims have migrated to recently. Those Muslims who live outside their country of birth are referred to as Muslims in Diaspora or Muslim Immigrants.

Muslims have their freedom in these countries to follow what they want in their personal lives. They have all the facilities to pray, fast, celebrate their festivals, dress how they want and take up whatever jobs they like, eat what they want, and so on. However, when it comes to community living and the laws of the country or the organizations they work for, Muslims have to understand that they should abide by these rules, which are common for all the citizens of the country or for all the staff of an organisation. It is a simple understanding of the owner's or the employer's rights.

Muslim immigrants have a common problem, which is cultural in nature. They have to live in a culture that is different from what they are accustomed. This is the first question facing Muslims who settle in other countries. Migrants of other communities easily adopt the culture of the foreign country and blend with the local population. Muslims must follow similarly.

This is an international norm. People who migrate and settle in another country should abide by the law of that land. Similarly, they must also adopt the local culture. This leads to harmony between the migrants and the locals. Disharmony will become an obstacle in the development of both groups. Muslims cannot develop a different norm for themselves. For example, if Muslims settle in another country and admit their children in schools for education, they must follow the school regulations. They must adjust to the prevalent culture, not demand that the school authorities should bend the rules to suit their culture.

Similarly, Muslims residing in a country where freedom of expression is considered absolute will have to accept this. If, for instance, people of this country, while exercising their freedom of expression, publish cartoons in their newspapers that hurt Muslim sentiments, then it is

upon Muslims to manage their sentiments instead of protesting against these newspapers and demanding a ban over such publications.

When a Muslim becomes a citizen of another country, he takes an oath of allegiance. On becoming citizens, Muslims enjoy equal benefits of citizenship with others. However, along with this, Muslims must fulfil the conditions of the oath of allegiance they have undertaken, both in letter and spirit. The option is to either live according to the oath or to leave the country. The third option—that of protest, does not exist.

A relevant verse of the Quran says: “Keep your promises; you will be called to account for every promise which you have made.” (17: 34). The word “promises” here includes all kinds of promises, big or small. It includes international oaths, made by individuals or nations. Accordingly, if a Muslim takes an oath of allegiance to a foreign country, it is incumbent on him to abide by it. If he cannot do this, he must leave that country.

If you take an oath of allegiance in a foreign country, you must abide by it. Else you must leave that country.

Another obligation on immigrant Muslims is to live as giver-members of their society rather than as takers. If they do not do this, they will have to pay a heavy price—they will not command respect in society. St Francis of Assisi has rightly said, “For it is in giving that we receive.” This is a law of nature and Muslims are no exception to this law in any way.

There is a historical example to this effect. In the first quarter of the seventh century, when the Prophet of Islam was in Makkah, some Muslims migrated to the neighbouring country of Abyssinia with the Prophet’s permission. These Muslims, approximately 125 in number, reached Abyssinia by the sea route. At the time, Abyssinia was ruled by the Christian king, Negus. The Muslims who went to live in Abyssinia created no problems for the local people. They lived in harmony with others and earned their livelihood through hard labor. When Abyssinia was attacked, the Muslims offered to join the country’s military and help in the defence against the aggression.

Muslims must live as law-abiding citizens in the country they choose to reside in. They must not violate international laws. The choice is either to live as law-abiding citizens of the country or to return to their previous homelands. They have no third option in this matter. □

THE AGE OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION—PART II

Discovering God Through Reason

Development of scientific knowledge has made it possible for religious beliefs to be established at exactly the same level of certainty at which other things of this material world are established. Science has now replaced the miracles of ancient times as evidence to prove the veracity of religion.

Some Examples

SEVERAL examples show how modern science has replaced miracles of ancient times. Religious beliefs and theological facts presented before people (the prophets' contemporaries) through miracles, may now be presented through established human knowledge. Today a *dayee* (one who calls people towards God) is not required to perform miracles to verify his message. Rather he has to provide proofs for his message in terms of established scientific knowledge.

The Existence of God

The first question relates to the proof of God's existence. Earlier, belief in God was a matter of conviction. Modern science provides proof of the existence of God, at least potentially, if not actually.

The existence of design in this world proves the existence of a designer—this is as valid an argument as other scientific arguments of the material world.

The focus of science is not God or the existence of the Creator. Its focus is the study of nature or creation. In the initial stage, it was held that all things had known causes and that is why there was no reason to study the Creator (the Cause of the causes). But detailed scientific study has shown that innumerable events are taking place in the universe every moment. There are numerous options before nature at every stage. Nature, on each occasion, selects only the most appropriate one.

This has compelled scientists to believe that there is an intelligent mathematical mind behind this universe. Such appropriate functioning of nature cannot be explained without believing in the existence of a superior intelligence behind nature. To quote a scientist: "The stuff of the world is mind-stuff."

The Big Bang Theory

It was commonly held that belief in God meant the acceptance of the eternity of God whereas we have no direct knowledge of this. The universe is a known and observable thing. Why should we not regard the universe as eternal instead of regarding God as eternal? The Big Bang theory has shown that the hypothesis of an eternal universe is no longer credible.

The Nobel Prize for physics was jointly awarded to two American Professors, John C. Mather and George F. Smoot. Both worked on the theory of the Big Bang (formulated initially in the first quarter of the 20th century) and published a book based on their researches. NASA had sent the rocket Cosmic Background Explorer into space in 1989 to study cosmic background radiation emitted at the time of the Big Bang and to send its photos back to earth. The information received has thrown fresh light on the theory of the Big Bang, lending strong support. It has helped pinpoint the age of the universe and supported the Big Bang being the cause of its birth. The Big Bang took place 13 billion years ago and shows that the universe had its beginning in a great explosion. Scientists have continued to work on this theory, firmly establishing it in the scientific world.

The theory of the Big Bang is of great significance to theology. It proves that the universe is not eternal, that it was created at a certain point in time through a big explosion. All this could not have happened accidentally and proves that some external factor was required to cause it. It provides strong logical support to the theory that this universe has been created by a Creator.

Freedom and Predestination

The universe has been so constructed that it offers a physical demonstration of truth. To a deep thinker, all the invisible truths become understandable at the visible level. Black Holes are such examples. The concept of the Black Hole makes the delicate relationship of the pre-ordaining of destiny and human freedom quite understandable.

The German astronomer, Karl Schwarzschild predicted by inference in 1916 that there might exist huge stars in space whose gravity might be so strong that it even prevents their light from escaping. Such huge stars in space remain invisible to man, since man can see objects only through the medium of light. Astronomers agreed on the possible existence of such stars, calling them 'Black Holes.'

Whether man's actions are predestined or he has freedom of choice, apparently man finds himself free in this world. But when God is all-Powerful, it seems unthinkable that man could have total freedom.

This objection is illogical. If God is the Possessor of all Power He surely possesses the power to set a limit on His Power at certain points. God might stop His power temporarily for some reason. This inference is apparently a theoretical one. But the discovery of black holes has confirmed this inference through demonstration.

At an international conference of physicists, James Watson Cronin, a Nobel prize winning physicist, presented a paper in which he discussed how 96 per cent of our universe is composed of dark matter. Dark matter cannot be detected directly, because it does not emit radiation or reflect light. James Watson further said that we think we understand the universe, but we only understand four per cent of it.

The Quran—Word of God

The Quran is a preserved divine book. The very first verses of the Quran include these words: "There is no doubt in it" (2: 2). Which means that it is a Divine book and there is no doubt about it. The Quran declared that it was a book of guidance for all mankind and for all time.

Modern science provides proof of the existence of God, at least potentially, if not actually.

To support this claim, it was essential that the events of later times continued to testify to it. No such event should take place in later times as might refute this statement. This claim has astonishingly lived up to this standard.

One example of the above claim is in the chapter 10 of the Quran which states that God drowned Ramasses II of Egypt in the 15th century BC, for he had denied Moses, the

Prophet of God. At that time God said to him: "We shall save your body this day, so that you may serve as a sign for those who come after you" (10: 92). This verse of the Quran was revealed in the first quarter of the 7th century, referring to an event which took place two thousand years before that. There was no printing press, no communications, and no record in known history of Pharaoh's body. People had even forgotten this event. No one knew at that time that the Pharaoh's body was going to come to light one day and would testify to the authenticity of this verse of the Quran. A thousand years after this revelation, scientists in

the latter half of the 19th century figured a way to determine the period to which ancient objects belonged. Further progress encouraged a great spirit of inquiry among the people. In every field people became active in discovering things that had remained hidden for centuries.

This spirit led scholars of Western Europe to head for Egypt. They began their research on the pyramids situated near Cairo. After concentrated efforts, they discovered that the pyramids contained the earthly remains of ancient Egyptian kings preserved in the form of mummies. With special care these mummies were taken out so that research could be done on them.

During these investigations, astonishingly, the body of the Pharaoh was found inside one of the pyramids. It was identified as the body of the Pharaoh who had been Moses' contemporary. It was predicted in the Quran 1400 years ago that this will come to the knowledge of man at some future date.

The Big Bang theory has shown that the hypothesis of an eternal universe is no longer credible.

This is clear proof that the Quran is a book of that God Who has knowledge of all things. In His wisdom, He revealed this verse in the Quran. This discovery is a scientific testimony of the Quran as a divine revelation.

Dr. Maurice Bucaille of France (d. 1998) travelled to Egypt with his companions in 1975 and directly observed this preserved body in the museum of Cairo. After a full verification he wrote a book on this subject in which he stated:

Those who seek among modern data for proof of the veracity of the Holy Scriptures, will find a magnificent illustration of verses of the Quran dealing with the Pharaoh's body by visiting the Royal Mummies Room of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo!

Prophets—Messengers of God

One of the basic religious beliefs is 'prophet hood'—that God sent prophets for man's guidance in every age, the last in the chain of prophets being Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Abdul Muttalib. These prophets were sent because man cannot discover guiding principles for his life from his own mind. That is why man needed to believe in God's prophets and receive guidance from them.

The guidance Prophet Muhammad received from God has been fully preserved in its original form. The first revelation the Prophet of Islam received, forms part of the chapter titled *Al-Alaq* (No. 96) of the Quran. God said: "Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One Who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know." (96: 3-5)

This is a declaration that man cannot find guidance on his own. In fields like agriculture, horticulture, engineering, etc., man gains knowledge through experience in his daily life. But the superior knowledge required for man's eternal guidance cannot be attained by man's own efforts. It is necessary to receive higher learning through prophetic guidance.

Scholars agree that the domain of science is limited only to the knowledge of things. The knowledge of truth is beyond the sphere of science.

The objective of all the great philosophers of ancient times was to discover guiding principles to govern human life. Despite great efforts made by great minds over several thousand years, philosophy has not produced any guidance of this nature. It is a fact that the efforts of philosophers have created confusion rather than any clear guidance.

Karl Marx's (d. 1883) book on the failure of philosophy titled *The Poverty of Philosophy*, was written from this viewpoint. It is generally true that philosophic thinking, based entirely on reason, has failed to provide eternal guiding principles. This ended the age of philosophy after the emergence of modern science. Philosophy is now considered a historical discipline rather than a living discipline.

The same was the case with mysticism. The mystic philosophers believed that they could attain the higher truth through contemplation and love, without the medium of human reason, or recourse to any other external source.

The history of mysticism spans several thousand years. Many have wanted to learn the truth through mysticism, but after long experience found that what man finally attains through mysticism is ecstasy. But in the matter of truth ecstasy has no importance.

The highlight of human existence is consciousness, or the mind. The successful seeker of truth finds it at the level of the mind, or consciousness, and not at the level of ecstasy. Ecstasy is a state of

unawareness which is given the beautiful name of ecstasy, a trance-like condition. But Truth is about discovering the higher reality at the level of consciousness.

A material analogy is the electric bulb and the powerhouse. The bulb in its inactivated state is a lightless object. With no inherent light, it lacks the innate ability to give light to others. But when connected to the powerhouse, it immediately lights up, becomes bright, giving light to others. This exemplifies the criterion for discovering truth. Finding the truth is like consciously finding a light. Mysticism does not fulfil this criterion; its pursuit leads to abstraction.

It has to be conceded that man cannot discover the necessary knowledge of truth through his own efforts and requires external guidance.

For a conscious being like man, an unawakened mind cannot realise the Higher Reality of God. God can be realised only through a developed mind. Science has the last word in this matter. Modern science has undoubtedly given man many things from telecommunication to consumer goods. But in the matter of truth, science has made it clear that the discovery of truth is not its domain.

A Western scholar has rightly said that the field of knowledge is vast, and can be classified as—knowledge of things and knowledge of truth. Scholars agree that the domain of science is limited only to the knowledge of things. The knowledge of truth is beyond the sphere of science. Science is not even a candidate for the position of purveyor of truth.

The study of man tells that deeper knowledge is required to determine how to lead life in this world. This has been dealt with in detail by Alexis Carrel in his book, *Man the Unknown*. It has to be conceded that man cannot discover this necessary knowledge through his own efforts and requires external guidance. Studying the life of the Prophet, we learn that without doubt, the Prophet is the man who is our real guide and God's representative. □

This is the concluding part of the article 'The Age of Science & Religion'. Part I of this article appeared in the September 2015 issue of SPIRIT OF ISLAM.

KEEPING CALM IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

Confidence and Composure

WHEN Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) escaped from the Island of Elba after his first term of imprisonment, he was accompanied by a small group of loyal soldiers. After having been dethroned, he again aspired for the throne of France. But in the very first encounter, he found himself face-to-face with 20,000 French soldiers.

Napoleon, one of the most courageous leaders the world has known, wisely avoided direct confrontation. At the crucial moment when he and his little band of men stood facing the enormous army, he stepped forward calmly, completely unarmed before his enemies. With great composure, he unbuttoned his coat baring his chest and in a voice charged with emotion, he addressed the great throng of soldiers—many of whom had served under him in the past: “Which one of you is willing to fire at the naked chest of his father?” The battlefield rang with shouts of ‘No one!’ Almost all the soldiers from the enemy camp rushed to Napoleon’s side. Despite his initial lack of military resources, Napoleon emerged victorious and once more ascended the throne of France. Had he attempted to do battle with the French army, he would surely have been slaughtered on that very battlefield.

Whatever a man’s resources, to deal effectively with a situation, he must be able to make a proper assessment. And he will not be able to do this if he panics in the face of danger. By steeling his nerves and keeping his mind open to what is practical, he can overcome the obstacles in his path. Inevitably his success depends on his choice of material and mental resources available and then putting them to proper use. History abounds in instances of the weak overcoming the strong simply by strategic deployments of resources.

Such success is often when the opponent is not as strong as he appears to be. Everyone has his Achilles’ heel. It is just a question of finding it and then responding accordingly. Just as Napoleon exploited the French troops’ sentimental loyalty to himself—that being his only mainstay—so, too, can ordinary individuals take advantage of their opponents’ vulnerability without the kind of confrontation that could be disastrous to both sides. □

TWO TYPES OF PEOPLE

Creators and Victims of History

A negative person is a victim of history, while a positive person helps shape history. The former simply laments the circumstances he finds himself faced with, while the latter rises above the circumstances and creates a new history.

It is common to be confronted with unfavourable and unwanted conditions. Something always happens that can be a cause for complaint. By reacting negatively, you become a passive victim of history, falling prey to the circumstances that surround you. People like this are constantly engaged in protest. They are incapable of doing anything positive or constructive.

On the other hand, there are other people who rise above circumstances and think positively. They form their opinions independently, and not out of reaction. Such people have, as it were, risen above history. Rather than being affected by the world, they help change the world. They become the shapers of history. All animals are products of history, but man's status is such that through his struggles he can make history.

Negative-thinking is a deadly poison for anyone. It is tantamount to allowing your circumstances to strangle you. If you save yourself from negative-thinking and reaction, you can lead a positive, fulfilled life, no matter how difficult the external circumstances might seem.

A negative thinker allows his life to be determined by others and his negative reactions to them. By contrast, a positive thinker stands on his own being.

The basis of negative thinking is the external world, the conditions that prevail outside of one's self. In contrast, positive thinking is based on one's inner self. A negative thinker allows his life to be determined by others and reacts negatively to them. By contrast, a positive thinker stands on his own being.

The most foolish person is one who, while being blessed with the opportunity to become an active participant in shaping this world, ends up becoming just a passive victim.□

PEACE OF MIND IS MOST IMPORTANT

Utilise Your Potential

THE mind is the greatest faculty of man, and peace the most favourable environment in which the mind can function to its full capacity. The mind is the greatest blessing of the Creator. All great achievements of the world are a result of the functioning mind. But it requires peace to function smoothly.



The Roman Empire ruled the greater portion of Europe and Africa for about 2,000 years. However, it witnessed no scientific development in this long period. Historians attribute this phenomenon to the lack of freedom of thought under the Roman rule. Any expression of dissent from the king's view was silenced by death; the watchword of this period being 'the king could do no wrong'. The king alone had the privilege to think freely leaving all others severely constrained. This atmosphere naturally led to intellectual stagnation.

All the great achievements of the world have been a result of the functioning of the mind. But the mind requires peace to function smoothly, as without peace one cannot proceed normally.

The French Revolution of 1789 put an end to the hereditary monarchical system of governance, and marked the dawn of a new democratic era in the world. The best benefit of this democratic culture was individual freedom of thought. If earlier only the king could think, now every individual was free to think and the thinking process increased a billion times over. This paved the way for an intellectual revolution, where scholars and scientists were unfettered and had every opportunity to think freely and make new discoveries.

Scientific research brought in the means of communication, which had been hidden in nature in the form of potential. In God's creation plan, everything in this world has always been in its potential form—including all amenities of the modern age.

But, those engaged in militancy run counter to this creation plan of God and are destroying peace. Peace and total freedom is essential

for people to think and work undisturbed. That is the only way in which they can convert the potential of the world into actuality. When a terrorist kills a person, he in actual fact kills a mind. Killing a number of people is the destruction of a large number of minds. People engaged in militancy in the name of a self-styled goal, are undoubtedly indulging in entirely undesirable acts, and thus jeopardizing the Creator's scheme of things.

The tremendous potential of the human mind can be availed only in a peaceful atmosphere. In the absence of a peaceful environment for work, the process that unfolds the potential of the mind will be left uninitiated and the mind's capabilities will remain unutilized. Those who perpetrate violence are indulging in an act that goes against nature.

The mind is the greatest faculty of man and peace is the most favourable environment in which the mind can function to its full capacity.

Since the time Muslims have taken to violence in the present age, no scientific development has come forth from this community. They have been reduced to a 'taker' community—unlike in the past. A principle of nature set forth in the Quran says, that only those who are 'givers' prove to be successful in this world. (13: 17)

Muslims engaged in violence have become a permanent obstacle to the progress of Muslims. They should forthwith cease all their violent activities and bury their weapons, so that an atmosphere of peace may prevail and they can emerge once again as a creative community.

Where terrorism exists, the work of education and scientific development comes to a halt. On the contrary, in countries where there is no terrorism, progress goes unabated in every field. This bears out the old adage that peace promotes all kinds of progress, while violence endangers all kinds of constructive activities.

No constructive target can be achieved by fighting. You cannot grow a tree by fighting. You cannot build a planned city by fighting. You cannot bring a developed civilization into existence by fighting. An educated society cannot be produced by fighting. Those engaged in fighting clearly demonstrate that they are totally unaware of the realities of life. Trying to achieve a positive target by fighting is a grave misjudgement of both man and the Creator.

The whole universe is one of peace. But this peace is compulsory, in the sense that it has been externally imposed. Then God Almighty wanted to create a being who could adopt self-imposed peace or have peace by choice. For this purpose, God settled man on the planet earth and promised the greatest reward for those who could stand up to the test of maintaining peace. Those who adopt the culture of violence go against the creation plan of God, thus taking the risk of forfeiting the great reward destined for them.

Those who adopt the culture of violence go against the creation plan of God, thus taking the risk of forfeiting the great reward destined for them by God.

The greatest disadvantage to those who adopt the culture of violence is that they live on the defensive, to the extent that they believe they are living under siege. This mind-set hampers creative thinking and leads to stagnation. The loss is so huge that there is no justification for continuing to perpetrate violence, even for a single moment.□



Story of Struggle

The fact is that every man and woman is born with great potential. But this potential is in terms of innate capacity and not in actuality. It is challenging circumstances that awaken people's minds and enable them to turn their potential into reality. In this competitive world, any success story is a story of struggle.

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PARADISE: MAN'S DESTINATION

Immunity From Sorrow

When the inhabitants of Paradise behold its bounties, they will exclaim:

All Praise be to God who has taken away all grief from us. Surely, our Lord is most forgiving and most appreciative. (THE QURAN 35: 34)

A unique feature of Paradise is that there will be no sorrow. If this present world is a sorrow-filled world, Paradise will be a sorrow-free world. There will no physical or psychological sorrow in Paradise.

According to the Quran, in this world man has been given all that he requires (14: 34). But there is one thing that is an integral and necessary part of this world—and that is sorrow.

No matter what you acquire or achieve in this world, an aspect of sorrow in some way or the other will always be included—through physical discomfort, psychological distress, fear of loss, sickness, boredom, accidents, unfulfilled desires, old age, death, apprehension about the future, the imperfectness of things, uncertainty, human limitations, lack of control over the results of one's actions, fear of others, tension, and so on.

No matter what you acquire or achieve in this world, there will always be an aspect of sorrow.

Paradise delivers immunity from all these worldly deficiencies. A place eternally free from sorrow is without a doubt, the ultimate destination for man. Anything less than that can certainly not be his ultimate destination. □



On Money

Spending money is like sowing a seed. If the seed will bring you a good harvest, it is well worth sowing, else it is better not to sow it at all.

GOING PLACES ON HOME GROUND

Discover Your Realm

PAUL DIRAC, who died in November 1984, was known to the world as the developer of the mathematics of quantum mechanical theory—the physics of the smallest part of the atom. He received his initial education, however, not in the field of mathematics, but in electrical engineering. Though he obtained a first-class degree at the Merchant Venturers Technical College, he did not excel. As J.G. Crowther wrote in his obituary: “His teachers did not consider him a genius.” (*The Muslim*, Islamabad, November 23, 1984).

He entered the mathematics department of Bristol University and went on to St. John’s College to continue his studies in the same field. It was here that “it was perceived that he had extraordinary intellectual powers.”

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

In the field of mathematics, Dirac was on home-ground. His success as a physical mathematician was phenomenal. He made fundamental contributions to quantum mechanics and quantum electrodynamics. Following Werner Heisenberg’s publication of the idea of a new quantum mechanics in 1925, Dirac independently went to work on creating an appropriate new mathematics for handling it. Among other discoveries, he formulated the Dirac equation as a relativistic

equation for the wave function of the electron. In 1930 he published his textbook *Principles of Quantum Mechanics*, which immediately became a classic. In 1932, at the incredibly early age of 30, he was appointed Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University, the chair Sir Isaac Newton had once occupied—a fitting post for one whom Niels Bohr called “the most remarkable scientific mind since Newton.”

Dirac was not successful in electrical engineering, but when he entered his own domain—mathematics—he thrived and showed amazingly innovative genius.

Like Dirac, everyone has a domain of their own to excel in. 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. □

THE UNIVERSE IS NOT A MACHINE

Flawless Creation

MAN has made a mechanical object called the robot that is outwardly just like a human being. It walks, talks, and works, but in reality it is just an electro-mechanical machine guided by a computer programme, not a conscious being. It acts in the same mechanical manner as any other computerized machine made by man.

Recently, a robot crushed a man to death at a Volkswagen production plant in Germany. The incident occurred at the factory in Baunatal, 62 miles north of Frankfurt, which assembles car components for other plants. The company confirmed the death on 1 July 2015.

The 22-year-old German worker was a technician installing a stationary robot. It was programmed to complete a series of tasks in the assembly process by grabbing parts and manipulating them. The robot grabbed and crushed the technician against a metal plate. He was rushed to a nearby hospital, but later died of his injuries.

A company spokesperson told the Associated Press that the robot can be programmed for specific tasks and that the company believes the malfunction was due to human error. Though the company uses some lightweight robots to work on the production line next to humans, a spokesperson told the Financial Times that this was not one of those robots. The type of robot that crushed the employee is usually kept in a cage. The man was working on the robot inside the cage when he was grabbed.

There is a conscious Being who controls the universe. Without such control, no such system and organization could ever have been possible in such a perfect form.

Prosecutors are still deciding whether to bring charges and whom they would pursue. (<http://time.com>)

In another incident, many years ago, a robot was commissioned for a London office to perform the work of an office-boy. When work on this robot was completed and it was brought to the office, the secretary of the office wanted to give it a trial run. She was examining its battery when it got activated. It started walking behind her! Then she began

Had the universe just been a mechanical object like a robot, there would definitely have been accidents in its functioning.

to run. The machine kept following her. The robot, now completely out of control continued chasing her, destroying office equipment in its path. With great difficulty the robot was brought under control.

Atheists of modern times hold that the universe is nothing but a huge machine. And that it has been working just like a robot, functioning in a mechanical way. But the highly

organized movements of the universe for billions of years completely refute this theory. Had the universe just been a mechanical object like the robot, there would definitely have been accidents similar to those mentioned above.

The Quran says:

“The sun hastens to its resting place: that is the decree of the Mighty One, the All-knowing. And for the moon, we have ordained phases for it till it becomes again like an old dry palm-branch. The sun is not allowed to overtake the moon, nor does the night outpace the day. Each in its own orbit runs.”

(36: 38-40)

This statement of the Quran has become an established observation and is sufficient proof of the fact that there is a conscious Being who controls the universe. Without such control, no such system and organization could ever have been possible in such a perfect form. □



After Night There is Day

The present is as temporary as the night. It is certain that the day will follow and there will be a bright future. The best policy is to work in the present and be sure that someday success will come your way.

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



WHEN TRUTH IS REVEALED

SOME people have not, in their hearts, bowed to God. Their outward prostration is mere pretence. In the next world, they will be asked to bow down before the Lord but they will not be able to do so.
(QURAN, 68: 42)

Prostration is not just a ritual and time-bound physical action; it is to surrender oneself to sublime reality. It is to make oneself follow truth in one's entire life. This verse of the Quran does not just refer to prostration in a limited sense; it indicates a truth which pertains to the whole of one's life.

In this world, people—both at individual and collective level—do not in their hearts bow to the reality; they do not adopt the path of truth. Yet, in their outward demeanor they pretend to be on the side of truth; they speak words which make it seem they are in the right and not harming or exploiting others.

But such deceit is possible only here, in this world of trial. In the next world, everything will change. Fake notes can be passed on the streets,

but banks will not accept them. So too, in the next world it will not be possible to make lies appear true, and injustice appear like justice.

In the next world, words will refuse to take on false meanings. No one will be able to call injustice 'justice' or disguise falsehood as truth. The difference between the outward and the inward will disappear. One will only be able to express what is in one's heart. People will appear exactly as they were in relation to reality, rather than in the manner which they used to contrive in front of others.

In the next world, words will refuse to take on false meanings. No one will be able to call injustice justice or disguise falsehood as truth.

If people can convince others, then they are sure that they have been proved right. But, in fact, true righteousness is only what God proclaims as righteousness. Falsehood will be exposed. This above-quoted verse, then, refers not only to hypocritical prostration, it also gives an indication of the outcome facing both individuals and nations in the Hereafter. □



Focusing on the Goal

Man has to be so engrossed in his work that everything else pales into insignificance beside it. Unless everything else loses its interest for him, he cannot climb to any great heights of success.

PROPHET MUHAMMAD—PART I

Exemplary Conduct

THE Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, upon whom be peace, was born in Arabia on 22 April 570 AD, and died on 8 June 632 AD. He was a handsome and powerfully built man. His childhood gave indications of the sublime and dynamic personality that was to emerge. Growing up, the nobility of his personality cast an effect on all who beheld him. His soft-spoken and genial disposition earned him a great deal of love from all who came in contact with him. A perfectly balanced personality—tolerant, truthful, perspicacious and magnanimous—he presented the highest example of human nobility. He became known as the most chivalrous among his people, tolerant and forbearing, truthful and trustworthy, always the good neighbour. He stayed aloof from quarrels and squabbles and never indulged in foul utterances, abuse or invective. People left their valuables in his custody, knowing he would never betray them. His unimpeachable trustworthiness won him the title of “*al-Amin*,” a faithful custodian, an unfailing trustee.

The Prophet's unimpeachable trustworthiness won him the title of “al-Amin,” a faithful custodian, an unfailing trustee.

He married at the age of twenty-five, his uncle Abu Talib performing the marriage service. “There is no one to compare with my nephew, Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah,” he said. “He outshines everyone in nobility, gentility, eminence and wisdom. By God, he has a great future and will reach a very high station.” Abu Talib meant them in a worldly sense. Nature had endowed his nephew with a magnetic and versatile personality. His people would surely appreciate his qualities, and raise him to a high position. Abu Talib envisaged a future of worldly success and accomplishment for his nephew; this was the “great future” which he referred to in his sermon.

Without doubt the Prophet had every opportunity for worldly advancement. He was born into a noble family of Makkah and his virtues guaranteed his success in life. True, he had inherited just one camel and one servant from his father, but his inborn high qualities had impressed the richest woman in Makkah, Khadijah, a forty-year-old widow belonging to a family of merchants. Not only did marriage with Khadijah provide the Prophet with wealth and property; it also

threw open to him a vast field of business in Arabia and beyond. The Prophet had every opportunity to lead a successful and comfortable life. But he forsook these, opting for something quite different. Intentionally he took a road that could only lead to worldly ruin. Before marriage, the Prophet had earned his living in different ways. He now relinquished all such activities, and dedicated himself to his lifelong

The Prophet had every opportunity to lead a successful and comfortable life. But he forsook these, opting for something quite different.

vocation—the pursuit of truth. He would sit for hours and ponder over the mysteries of creation. Instead of socializing and trying to gain a position for himself among the nobles of Makkah, he wandered in the hills and dales of the desert. Often he retired to the solitude of a cave in Mount Hira’—three miles from Makkah— for prayer and meditation. He visited home only to replenish his supplies, He beseeched the Maker of the heavens and the earth for answers to the questions

surging in his mind. What is our true role in life? What does the Lord require of us, His servants? Whence do we come and whither will we go after death? Unable to find answers in the midst of human bustle, he betook to the stillness of the desert; perhaps there the answer would be forthcoming.

The Romanian orientalist Konstan Virgil George (b. 1916) writes in his book, *The Prophet of Islam*:

Until one has spent some time in the wilds of Arabia and the Middle East, one cannot begin to understand how the vastness and tranquillity of the desert expands the human intellect and fortifies the imagination. There is a great difference between European and Arabian plants. There is no plant in the arid reaches of the desert that does not exude a sweet fragrance; even the acacia trees of this land are aromatic. The desert stretches for 3,000,000 square kilometres. Here it is as though man comes into direct contact with God. Other countries are like buildings in which massive walls obstruct one’s view; but there is nothing blocking one’s vision of reality in the vast open reaches of Arabia. Wherever one looks, one sees endless sands and fathomless sky. Here, there is nothing to stop one from consorting with God and His angels.

It was unusual for a young man to take this course in the prime of life. He renounced worldly happiness and chose a path fraught with difficulties. He had all means and opportunities for a comfortable life, but his turbulent soul found no satisfaction in them. He could not rest content until he had unravelled the mysteries of life. He sought to delve beyond external appearances, and seek out the reality of life. Worldly gain and loss, comfort and distress, did not concern him; what mattered was the all-important question of truth and falsehood.

This phase of the Prophet's life is referred to thus in the Quran:

Did he not find you wandering and guide you? (THE QURAN 93: 7)

The word used in this verse for "wandering" (*dhallan*) can also be used to describe a tree standing alone in an empty desert. The Prophet, then, was like a lone tree standing amidst the vast wilderness of ignorance that was Arabia of the time. The idea of consolidating his position in this society was abhorrent to him. He sought the truth, and nothing less than the truth could satisfy his soul. His quest had reached a point when life had become an unbearable burden. The Quran looks back on that time:

Have We not lifted up and expanded your heart and relieved you of the burden, which weighed down your back?

(THE QURAN 94: 1-3)

God indeed relieved him of his burden. He turned in mercy to His Prophet, illuminating his path and guiding him on his journey. On February 12, 610 AD, the Prophet was sitting alone in his cave. The angel of the Lord appeared before him in human form and taught him the words, which appear at the beginning of the ninety-sixth chapter of the Quran. The Prophet's quest had finally been rewarded. His restless soul had joined in communion with the Lord. Not only did God grant him guidance; He also chose Muhammad as His Prophet and special envoy to the world. The mission of the Prophet extended over the next twenty-three years. During this period the entire content of the Quran—the final divine scripture—was revealed to him.

***The Prophet
beseched the Maker
of the heavens and
the earth for answers
to the questions
surging in his mind.
What is our true role
in life? What does the
Lord require of us,
His servants?***

The Prophet of Islam discovered Truth in the fortieth year of his arduous life. It was an attainment, the Truth that he stood face to face with an Almighty God. It was discovery of his helplessness before the might of God, of his nothingness before the supernatural magnitude of the Almighty. With this discovery it became clear that God's faithful servant had nothing but responsibilities in this world; he had no rights.

The meaning that life took on for the Prophet after the Truth came to him can be ascertained from these words:

Nine things the Lord has commanded me. Fear of God in private and in public; justness, whether in anger or in calmness; Moderation in both poverty and affluence; That I should join hands with those who break away from me; and give to those who deprive me; and forgive those who wrong me; and that my silence should be meditation; and my words remembrance of God; and my vision keen observation. (*Hadith of Razin*)

These words were a reflection of the Prophet's very life. Poignant and wondrously effective words of this nature could not emanate from an empty soul; they indicate the status of the speaker; they are an outpouring of his inner being, an unquenchable spirit revealed in verbal form.

The Prophet sought to delve beyond external appearances, and seek out the reality of life.

Even before this revelation, the Prophet's life had followed the same pattern. The motivation however had been subconscious; now it rose to the level of consciousness. Actions previously based on instinctive impulses now became the well-conceived results of

profound thinking. This is the state of one who reduces material needs to a minimum; whose life assumes a unique pattern; who in body lives in this world, but in spirit dwells on another plane.

The Prophet once said,

A discerning person should have some special moments: a moment of communion with God; a moment of self-examination; a moment of reflection over the mysteries of creation; and a moment which he puts aside for eating and drinking.
(*Hadith of ibn Hibban*)

In other words, this is how God's faithful servant passes the day. The yearning of his soul brings him so close to God that he finds communion with the Lord. Fear of the day of reckoning makes him reckon with himself. At times he is so overawed by the marvels of God's creation that he starts seeing the splendours of the Creator reflected therein. He spends his time remembering the Lord, introspecting, and contemplating the world around him, while also finding time to cater for his physical needs.

These words are a reflection of the Prophet's own personality, a flash from the light of faith that illuminated his own heart. These "moments" were an integral part of the Prophet's life. One who has not experienced these states can never describe them in such a lofty manner. The soul from which these words emanated was itself in the state that they describe; through words, that state of spiritual perfection was communicated to others.

Worldly gain and loss, comfort and distress, did not concern him; what mattered was the all-important question of truth and falsehood.

Before he received the word of God, this world with all its shortcomings and limitations appeared meaningless to the Prophet. God revealed to him that besides this world there was another perfect and eternal world, the real abode of man. With this, life and the universe took on new meaning. He found a new and sublime level for his soul, a life in which he could involve himself totally. The Prophet now found a world where he could put his heart and soul, a target for his hopes and aspirations, a goal for his life's endeavours.

When reality gets rooted, it transforms one by raising one's level of existence. The Prophet of Islam provides us with a superlative example of this way of life. The greatest lesson imparted by his life is that unless one changes one's plane of existence, one cannot change one's plane of actions.

When the Prophet Muhammad discovered the reality of the world hereafter, it came to dominate his whole life. He himself became most desirous of the heaven which he described to others, and was most fearful of the hell of which he warned others. Deep concern for the life to come was always welling up inside him. Sometimes it would surge to his lips in the form of supplication, and sometimes in the form of

heartfelt contrition. He lived on a completely different plane from that of ordinary human beings. This is illustrated by many incidents a few of which are mentioned here.

Once the Prophet was at home with his wife, Umm Salamah. He called the maid-servant, who took some time in coming. Seeing signs of anger on the Prophet's face, Umm Salamah went to the window and saw that the maid was playing. When she came, the Prophet had a *miswak* (a small stick used as a dentifrice) in his hand. "If it wasn't for the fear of retribution on the Day of Judgement," he told the maid, "I would have hit you with this *miswak*." Even this mildest of punishments was to be eschewed.

The men taken prisoner in the Battle of Badr were the Prophet's bitterest enemies, yet he treated them impeccably. One of these prisoners, Suhayl ibn 'Amr, a fiery speaker, denounced the Prophet virulently in public to incite people against him and his mission. Umar ibn al-Khattab, the Prophet's Companion suggested that two of his lower teeth be pulled out to dampen his oratorical zeal. The Prophet was shocked by 'Umar's suggestion. "God would disfigure me for this on the Day of Judgement, even though I am His messenger," he said to 'Umar.

When the Prophet Muhammad discovered the reality of the world hereafter, it came to dominate his whole life.

This is what is meant by the world being a planting ground for the hereafter. One who realises this fact lives a life oriented towards the hereafter—a life in which all efforts are aimed at achieving success in the

next eternal world; a life in which real value is attached—not to this ephemeral world—but to the life beyond death. One becomes aware that this world is not the final destination; it is only a road towards the destination, a starting-point of preparation for the future life. All actions of God's faithful servants are focused on the hereafter. Their reactions reflect their perspective of life after death, and the effect in the next world. Whether it be an occasion of happiness or sorrow, success or failure, domination or depression, praise or condemnation, love or anger—they are forever guided by thoughts of the hereafter, until finally these thoughts become a part of their unconscious minds. They are mortal, but their minds function only on matters related to the world of immortality, making them almost forget their interest in worldly matters. □

WORKING ON THE INDIVIDUAL

Treat the Cause Not the Symptom

Solidarity has to be achieved at an individual level before it can come about in society. For it is a law of nature which applies to human society, that for a tree to bear good fruit, it is the seed, not the fruit itself, that has to be improved.

A man was riding his bicycle one day when all of a sudden his brakes jammed. He took his cycle to a nearby cycle repair-shop to have it fixed. Thinking that the mechanic would fix the brakes at the point where they were jammed, the cyclist was surprised to see him tap away with a small hammer at a completely different place. Before he was able to express his surprise, the mechanic handed the cycle back to him. "That's fixed it. You can take it away now," he said. And off the cyclist rode, with his bicycle once again running smoothly!

What was true of this bicycle is true also of human society. People usually jump to the conclusion that where the malaise lies, there lies the cure. But this is not always the case. Usually, the root of the malaise lies in a different place, far away from the symptoms. Until the cause is removed, the malaise itself will not go away.

For instance, there might be a lack of solidarity in society, or a section of people may be the victims of oppression. Maybe the society is beset with an atmosphere of intrigue, with the result that its voice carries no weight in the world. One who determines to right the ills of society might well think that the cure lies in calling meetings and organising conventions in order to bring people together, stirring them up with emotional speeches and passing bombastic resolutions, and so on.

But this is no way to cure the actual ills of society. One has to work on the cause, not the symptoms. While a problem seems to be afflicting one part of society, the cure lies elsewhere. If there is a lack of social solidarity, for instance, the reason for this is the failure of individuals to stand together.

It is the individual, then, who has to be worked on. Solidarity has to be achieved at an individual level before it can come about in society. For it is a law of nature which applies to human society as well, that for a tree to bear good fruit, it is the seed, not the fruit itself, that has to be improved. □

WORSHIPPING MONEY

Today's Religion

FROM the cultural point of view, there are several religions in the world. But in terms of ideology, the religion of today's world is just one—the worship of money. Almost everyone's sole purpose in life is to accumulate as much wealth as possible. There is no difference in this regard between seemingly religious and non-religious people.

Innumerable inventions and products are now available to meet people's physical needs and desires. And then, these were commercialized. The markets were flooded with innumerable products. This has stimulated an irrepressible desire for these things.

Almost everyone's sole purpose in life is to accumulate as much wealth as possible. There is no difference in this regard between seemingly religious and non-religious people.

'If only we had the money, we could have bought all these things—from a needle to an airplane!' they think. The arrival of television and advertising has added momentum to this consumerist culture.

As a result, the entire world is under the sway of 'money culture'. Every person is now fired by greed to earn or accumulate as much money as possible. There is the case of a man who wanted to buy a house in a posh colony only because he did not want his Mercedes to be parked next to a car that cost much less

than his! This is the attitude promoted by 'money culture'. Such thinking has now become so pervasive that it is universal. Some express this in words, others by actions, but their religion is the same—the worship of money. □



Unfolding One's Potential

*It is everyone's duty to unfold their potential.
One who dies without unfolding their intellectual
potential, dies like an animal.*

INTROSPECTION IN ISLAM

Purify Yourself for Paradise

INTROSPECTION (or what is called *muhasaba* in Arabic and *ehtisab* in Urdu) has an important place in Islam. Without introspection, you cannot stand on true faith. Without engaging in self-analysis, you cannot purify yourself in order to be selected for Paradise. Self-observation leading to identifying and correcting your mistakes on a regular basis, will protect you from egoism, arrogance and bad intentions.

People harbour numerous desires. Living in society, one is constantly faced with provocative situations and negative experiences, which, if not handled properly, can lead one to develop negative emotions. Hence, it is very important to engage in regular self-analysis or introspection. It was a *Sunnah* or practice of the Prophet of Islam to reflect and introspect daily. Regular reflection on your actions, speech, and intentions acts as self-purification, helping you follow the principles of Islam in the right manner.

Without introspection, you cannot stand on true faith. Without engaging in self-analysis, you cannot purify yourself in order to be selected for Paradise.

There are two areas for introspection. Some are evils that we know to be bad and others are hidden or secret evils. All evils or unwanted actions fall into one of these categories. Regular introspection helps us to check if we are engaging in either category of evil.

In Islam, consuming wine, dealing in usury, committing murder, engaging in adultery and eating pork, for instance, are clearly forbidden. All Muslims know or should know these to be wrong and refrain from these actions. These can be called 'unjustified evils', since Islam clearly forbids them. Believers cannot justify them in any way.

But there are other evils that can be called 'justified evils'. People who engage in these evils offer what they regard as justifications for them. Consciously or otherwise, they do not believe these actions to be sinful because they are wrongly sought to be justified as 'good'.

This point is referred to in a *Hadith* report. The Prophet of Islam said that in the future, a group among his followers would consume wine.

Asked why they would do so when God had clearly forbidden it, the Prophet said that these people would give a new name to wine and declare it to be lawful. (*Al-Darimi*) That is to say, people will invent some justification for drinking wine.

'Wine' here is a symbol of a larger phenomenon. As in the case of wine, people will seek to justify other evils by cleverly renaming them. 'Justified evils' are deceptive and dangerous. Those indulging in these are unaware that they are sinful. It is like drinking poison believing it to be water or a soft drink. The poison will kill you, notwithstanding the fact that you do not think it is harmful. No seemingly innocuous or sweet-sounding name you may give it, can save you.

Introspection functions as a mirror, reflecting your real self. When you know yourself and recognize the wrongs you are engaged in, you can correct yourself.

This is the case with every 'justified evil'. If you indulge in a 'justified evil', you cannot save yourself from its bad effects and hence the need to introspect every day. This may help you realise the 'justified evils' (in addition to 'unjustified' ones) that you may consciously or unconsciously, be indulging in, and then you can cease to do so. Regular introspection alone can help you identify your weaknesses, evil habits, mistakes, and sins including those that you do not think are bad.

Introspection thus functions as a mirror, reflecting your real self. When you know yourself and recognize the wrongs you are engaged in, you can try to correct yourself. Introspection or self-observation, is an integral and necessary aspect of self-correction, a daily requirement of a Muslim's life. Without it, one flounders like a blind man. The second Muslim Caliph, Umar ibn Al-Khattab once said: "Reckon with yourselves before you are reckoned with; weigh up your own actions before they are weighed up; and prepare for the Great Summons." This is a very instructive saying containing the whole philosophy of introspection.

The following verse from the Quran underlines the importance of introspection: "When any evil suggestion from Satan touches those who fear God, they are instantly alerted and become watchful" (7: 201). Introspection, therefore, is related to the fear of God. When you discover God, you discover God as the Almighty, as the Creator, as Lord of the Day of Judgment. This discovery makes you extremely cautious, realising that one day you will be brought before God. God created

this world as a testing ground and every human being in this world has been put to the test. When you read the Quran, the Book of God, you learn that two angels as Divine watchers are busy maintaining a record of our actions and intentions. This record will be presented to God, and we will be rewarded or punished according to it.

The philosophy of Divine reward and punishment is based on this angelic recording. When you learn this, you become deeply concerned about your every intention and action. This acts as a major inspiration for you to engage in constant introspection, do good and not deviate from the Divine path. It serves as an incentive to make you stay away from evil, both 'justified' and 'unjustified'.

The understanding of life being a test and the realisation that our eternal life after death depends on our conduct in this world are incentives for constant introspection. This helps sustain one's commitment to introspection. As the well-known saying goes, 'To err is human'. According to a *Hadith* report, the Prophet said, "All of the children of Adam make mistakes, and the best of those who make mistakes are the ones who repent." (*Tirmidhi*)

The understanding of life being a test and the realisation that our eternal life after death depends on our conduct in this world are incentives for constant introspection.

It is in human nature to commit mistakes. But with the spirit of introspection, you will readily admit your mistakes. You will not hesitate to say that you were wrong. You will not try to cover up your mistakes, as many do. Those who introspect need never engage in this 'Operation Cover-Up'. Everyone, from 'ordinary' individuals to senior government officials, is engaged in some sort of cover-up, but one who introspects will not need this. He will readily admit that he was wrong and when he does this, his correction process begins. The process of self-correction begins from admitting your mistake. Without such confession, there is no self-correction. This is what introspection is about.

It is in human nature to commit mistakes, but the real evil is not to admit your mistake. A true believer is not one who makes no mistakes. Rather, when he realises committing a mistake, he immediately says, 'I was wrong.' Confessing one's mistake is like taking a spiritual bath that purifies you. This can come about only through constant and sincere introspection.

In contrast to 'unjustified evils', it is difficult to recognise 'justified evils'. Indulging regularly in evil over a long time and justifying them as 'good', conditions a person. To come out of this, one needs appropriate de-conditioning. This requires deep introspection, only through which you can purify yourself. The Quran says, "...he will abide forever in the Gardens of eternity, through which rivers flow. That is the recompense for those who purify themselves" (20: 76). Only purified souls will go to Paradise.

Nowadays Muslims are engaged in a number of 'justified evils'—hating people of other faiths, engaging in suicide-bombing and terrorism. They brand others as 'enemies', although there is no enemy. They accuse others of being involved in atrocities and conspiracies against them. But this is wrong. There are a number of verses in the Quran that tell us that one is responsible for one's own condition, and not some enemy. If you are suffering, if you are deprived of something, it is the price you have to pay for your own backwardness. To realise this and to extricate yourself from the predicament in which you find yourself, you need to introspect. You need to discover the 'justified evils' you are indulging in, de-condition your mind and reform yourself. You cannot purify yourself without this sort of deconditioning based on introspection.

According to a *Hadith* report, the Prophet said: "A man's feet will not move from near his Lord on the Day of Judgment until he is asked concerning four matters: his life – how he spent it; his youth – how he utilized it; his wealth – how he earned it and where he spent it; and how much he acted upon from the knowledge that he acquired." (*Tirmidhi*) You will have to answer all these questions. It is a very serious matter. From another *Hadith* report, the Prophet said: "Anybody whose record of deeds is questioned on the Day of Judgment will surely be in trouble." (*Bukhari*) Given this, we need to prepare ourselves for the Day of Judgment and avoid punishment. And for that, we need to constantly engage in introspection and self-correction.

Introspection in the present can save you from punishment in the future. Introspection in the pre-death phase of your life can save you from punishment in your post-death phase. Introspection is thus an integral part of faith, of Islam, of being God-conscious, of piety. Without introspection, there is no Islam. Without introspection, there is no Muslim character. □

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

Breaking Your Oaths

ACCORDING to media reports, Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez opened fire on two military installations in Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA, on July 16, 2015. He first committed a drive-by shooting at a recruiting centre, then headed to a U.S. Navy Reserve Center and continued firing until he was killed by police in a gunfight. Five people died in the shootings, including four U.S. Marines, who died at the scene and one U.S. Navy sailor, who died at a hospital two days later.

Abdulazeez (1990 - 2015), a naturalized American citizen, was a Jordanian born in Kuwait. However, according to Jordanian sources, he was a Palestinian with Jordanian citizenship; his parents described themselves as Palestinians. He immigrated to the U.S. with his family in 1996 and received citizenship in 2003. (<https://en.wikipedia.org>)

The most important responsibility of Muslims is to convey the message of God and this task should continue generation after generation.

Although the youth was a Muslim, his acts were totally un-Islamic. They were against the teachings of Islam in every respect. Violence is perpetrated with the help of guns and bombs, but the thought of the act is initially harboured in the mind. Therefore, if we have to arrest this kind of violence, our efforts should start from re-engineering the minds of Muslim youth.

It is important to explain to them that although their actions are done in the name of Islam, they are completely un-Islamic.

The first duty of Muslims towards non-Muslim nations is not *jihad* but *dawah*, or conveying to them the message of God. The most important responsibility of Muslims is to convey the message of God, and this task should continue generation after generation.

Moreover, according to Islamic teachings, *jihad* is the name of peaceful *dawah* work. Engaging in violence in the name of *jihad* is the result of a misinterpretation of this concept. Islam allows for defensive war, but that is permissible, if the need so arises, only for a Muslim state and not for individuals or non-state actors.

Going against one's oath is a punishable act in Islam. Undoubtedly, a person who acts against the oath he has taken proves that he is a criminal.

One of the motives behind the Muslim youth's attack was the belief that America is an enemy of Islam. Such notions are entirely baseless. The fact is just the opposite; America is a friend of Islam. The proof for this is that currently, about five million Muslims are living in the United States and they have established innumerable organizations and institutions which are carrying out their activities with complete freedom.

Those Muslim youths who are engaged in violence wrongly believe that they are doing *jihad* against an enemy. For the sake of argument, if we suppose that America is indeed an enemy of Islam and Muslims, even then, stepping out with a gun and shooting down Americans are actions completely at variance with the teachings of Islam. Taking action against an enemy is the prerogative of an established state, and not of individuals. Therefore, if one believes that 'so and so' is an enemy, then the correct procedure would be to refer the case to an established Muslim state, rather than taking measures oneself. Resorting to violence to kill one's supposed enemies, would be totally un-Islamic.

An example of this principle is available in Islamic history. In the 13th century, the Tartars attacked the Abbasid Caliphate based in Baghdad. At that time, al-Imam Ibn Taymiyyah, a well-known Islamic scholar thought that the situation required military action. However, he did not

act on his own, rather, he wrote a letter to the Muslim Sultan of Egypt and Syria, Al-Nasir Muhammad, advising him to take military measures against the Tartar attackers. (*Al-Siyasah al-Shariyyah, Ibn Taymiyyah*)

It is important to know that an individual cannot declare a country as an enemy. Rather, the whole community of Muslims would have to make this declaration. Once such a declaration is made, the entire Muslim community living there would have to emigrate from such a country. According to Islamic *fiqh*, residing in a country which is considered an 'enemy' country is unlawful.

***Engaging in violence
in the name of jihad
is the result of a
misinterpretation of
the Quran.***

The Palestinian youth migrated to America and took US citizenship. The oath of allegiance to the United States of America reads: "I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God."

The actions of the Muslim youth went against this oath of citizenship. An oath, in Islamic teaching, is a promise. The Quran says that one should fulfill one's promise, else one will be held accountable before God (17:34). Going against one's oath is a punishable act in Islam. Undoubtedly, a person who acts against the oath he has taken proves that he is a criminal. □



DEATH AT EVERYONE'S DOORSTEP

Point of No Return

THE day was July 27, 2015. There was a sense of shock and disbelief among the students and staff of the Indian Institute of Management, Shillong, who were witness to former President of India, APJ Abdul Kalam's final moments when he collapsed while delivering a lecture.

The disbelief – that the “Missile Man” they looked up to was no more – was compounded by the fact that the former President was brimming with enthusiasm and energy till the time he passed away.

There was not the slightest hint of what was in store when Dr. Abdul Kalam, began his lecture to the second year students of IIM-Shillong, on ‘Creating a Livable Planet’.

***Prepare for the Day
when mankind will
stand before the Lord
of the Universe.***

About fifteen minutes into his speech, while sharing his experiences, he suddenly fainted and fell down, around 6.30 p.m. The medical officer of the IIM, tried to revive him but failed.

At the time of his death, Dr. Abdul Kalam was 83 years of age. Suddenly, the Angel of Death came to him and said: ‘Your period of living

on planet earth was 83 years. Now you have to travel to another world: the world of the Hereafter.’

Death comes to everyone at “83 years”, a point of no return, destined for every man and woman. Successful is the one who awakens before his “83 years” are over! After their “83 years”, all are destined to appear before God. Wise is the one who tries to prepare himself for this moment. This is referred in the Quran as “The Day when mankind will stand before the Lord of the Universe”. (83: 6) □



THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures

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

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

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

When the hypocrites come to you, they say, 'We bear witness that you are indeed the Messenger of God.' God knows that you are indeed His Messenger, but God bears witness that the hypocrites are surely liars

— (63: 1)

It is a sign of hypocrisy if an individual indulges in tall talk and resorts to swearing oaths to reassure others of the truth of his words. A sincere man is subdued out of fear of God. He speaks more from his heart than from his tongue. A hypocrite is eager for people to hear his voice, while a sincere man is eager that God hear his voice.

— they use their oaths as a cover and thus they bar others from God's way: what they have been doing is truly evil — that is because they believed and then rejected their faith: their hearts are sealed up, so that they are devoid of understanding. (63: 2-3)

When a man embraces the faith, he makes a sincere vow. Thereafter, practical occasions arise in life when he is required to act according to his vow. On such occasions, one who hears the voice of his heart and fulfils the requirements of his vow, has in effect revived and confirmed his vow of faith. On the contrary, ignoring his inner voice and breaching his vow will eventually make him insensitive about his vow of faith. This is the meaning of 'their hearts are sealed up'.

When you see them, their outward appearance pleases you; when they speak, you listen to what they say. But they are like propped up blocks of timber. They think that every shout is directed against them. They

are the [real] enemies, so beware of them. The curse of God be upon them! How they turn away! When they are told, 'Come! The Messenger of God will ask forgiveness for you!' they turn their heads away and you see them walking away arrogantly.

It makes no difference whether you ask forgiveness for them or not. God will not forgive them: God does not guide such rebellious people.

(63: 4-6)

A hypocrite protects his interests by his compromising and self-interested approach. He does not discriminate between right and wrong. However, he maintains good relations with everybody and speaks as though he is interested in their welfare. Everyone finds him agreeable. But these apparently 'fresh green trees' are in reality 'dry sticks.' To the hypocrite, worldly interest matters more than religious interest. Such people, despite claiming to be men of faith, are deprived of God's guidance.

They are the ones who say, 'Give nothing to those who follow God's Messenger, until they abandon him;' but the treasures of the heavens and the earth belong to God, though the hypocrites do not understand this [and] they say, 'Indeed, when we return to Madinah, [we] the ones most worthy of honour, will surely drive out from there the contemptible ones!' [referring to poor Muslims]. However, all honour belongs to God, and to His Messenger and those who believe [in God]: but of this the hypocrites are not aware. (63: 7-8)

In Madinah, at the time of the Prophet, there were two groups of Muslims—one, the Migrants (*al-Muhajrun*), and the other, the Helpers (*al-Ansar*)—the local hosts in Madinah. The Migrants had come to Madinah on being displaced from their native place, Makkah. Their apparent supporters were the local Muslims of Madinah, the Helpers. In the eyes of world-loving people, the Migrants seemed to be people without honour compared to the Helpers, who were respectable people. This was felt so keenly that on one occasion, 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy clearly stated, 'What is the status of these Migrants? If we expel them from our place, they will not find refuge anywhere in the world.'

Such people are unaware of the reality that everything in this world belongs to God. He gives to whomever He wishes and takes away from whomever He wishes.

O believers! Do not let your wealth or your children distract you from remembrance of God. Those who do so will be the losers. And spend out of what We have provided you with before death comes to one of you and he says, 'My Lord! If only You would grant me respite for a little while, then I would give alms and be among the righteous.' But God will not grant a reprieve to a soul when its appointed time has come; God is well-aware of what you do. (63: 9-11)

The biggest issue for man is the inevitability of the Hereafter. But the consideration of riches and children make a man unmindful of it. Man should know that riches and children are not the final goal but the blessings given to him to utilise them for God's work. He should use them to improve his life in the Hereafter. But man, in his stupidity, takes them to be his goal. When such people come face to face with their eventual final fate, they will experience only frustration and regret.□



How to Become Beautiful

Sincerity is not a single value. It combines several good human values. Where there is sincerity, there is moral beauty. In contrast, insincerity makes you ugly.

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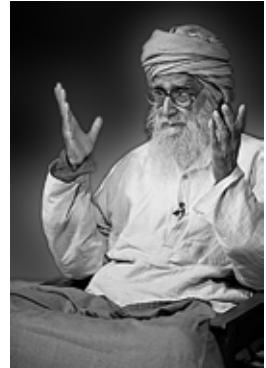
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ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan in a Discussion with an Academic From Sweden

You say that the essence of Islam is peace. But how is it that there are hardly any democracies among the numerous Muslim countries, and that in many such countries there is no peace? There's so much violence happening there.



One needs to distinguish between ideology and practice; between Islam and Muslims' attitudes and behaviour. Muslim countries are not truly Islamic. The sources of Islam are only two—the Quran and the practice or *Sunnah* of the Prophet of Islam. You need to evaluate Muslims on the criterion of the Quran and *Sunnah*.

Islam acknowledges democracy and was the first to introduce democratic ideology. The Quran talks of a system based on mutual consultation, or *shura*, the basis of democracy. But present-day Muslims are a degenerated community. They don't follow Islam according to the Quran and *shura*. Instead, they follow their own cultural traditions and what they perceive as their own interests. So, as I said, one needs to distinguish between Islam and Muslims. Muslims should be judged or gauged according to Islamic teachings, and not vice versa.

According to you, what is the root cause of conflict between people?

Conflict arises from competing interests.

This world is based on competition. God has given us freedom. Human freewill is basic to God's Creation Plan. Due to this freedom there is competition between people, clashes based on perceptions of self-interest. There have always been conflicts between people. You can't totally eliminate it. It simply isn't possible, because people have their own desires, their own perceptions of self-interest, and of course, freewill. All these are interwoven in human nature, and human nature can't be changed. Being based on human nature, it is natural that there will be conflict between people.

What, then, are we to do?

You need to learn to adjust so as to avoid conflict, to avoid problems. My formula is 'Avoid conflicts, and avail existing opportunities.' We need to remember that problems are a part of life. People generally take problems as a bad thing. I, however, don't. This is because problems and conflicts create challenges for us, and without challenges there is no growth. So, what you call 'conflicts' are actually challenges, without which there is no development.

So, are you saying that conflicts can be good as they lead to development?

I am saying that conflict is part of nature, not good or bad. The fact is that you cannot eliminate conflict, because it is part of nature. So, you need to adjust to conflict.

If you consider conflict is bad, you will try to eliminate it. Eliminating conflict is against the law of nature. Conflict is part of creation, and no one has the power to change the law of nature. Ending conflict means trying to change the law of nature, which is not possible.

But if you develop the understanding that conflicts are natural and view them as challenges that can help you grow, you will soon realise that they are actually opportunities.

So, are you saying that the problem is not conflict as such, but rather, the method that one adopts in handling or relating to conflicts?

Yes. According to my experience, conflict becomes evil when you react. Your reaction makes it an evil thing. If you don't react, then there is no problem. So, conflict itself is not a problem. It is the reaction to it that is the problem. If you tolerate or adjust to the challenge posed by conflict, there is no problem.

How did you come to realise that non-violence is intimately related to Islam?

Islam claims to be a religion of nature, that it is based on nature. According to my study, peace is an important part of nature. For instance, take the vast number of heavenly bodies. There's no clash between the numerous planets and stars. Nature is at peace. There's

no world war happening among animals and birds! Peace is a principle of nature. It is logical that human beings too, should live in peace. In this sense, I have to acknowledge that peace is the *summum bonum*.

As I study the life of the Prophet of Islam, I find that the Prophet always wished to live in peace. It is true that on some occasions he was engaged in battles. But these were not full-fledged wars in the true sense of the term. Rather, they were mere skirmishes. The Prophet wanted peace at any cost. The best illustration of this was the Treaty of Hudaibiya, where the Prophet accepted all conditions imposed by the other party, only to establish peace.

This is an example from the phase of the Prophet's life when he was in Madinah. We can find similar examples from the Makkan phase of his life, too. For instance, in Makkah, when the Prophet started his mission, the Kaaba was full of idols, but he never tried to destroy them. He simply ignored their presence.

Why was this so?

Without this avoidance, it wasn't possible to establish peace in Makkah, and without peace the Prophet couldn't carry on his mission. So, he accepted the presence of the idols in the Kaaba and never objected to it. And so, he was able to carry on smoothly the *dawah* mission, of inviting people to God.

The Prophet always tried to establish peace, even if it meant unilateral acceptance of the conditions laid by the opponent. Why is peace so important? Without peace, nothing constructive can happen—be it study, prayer, social work or any other positive activity. I love peace, and I know that peace has a pivotal role in Islam.

I wish those Muslims who have taken to radicalism would see and say the same thing, that Islam is a religion of peace. In every community, it seems, people have manipulated religion to suit their own desires and promote conflict. Violence is not intrinsic to religion. All religions, interpreted rightly, are peaceful. Isn't it?

There's another point that I discovered from Islam. It has to do with many of the issues we have been discussing, the difference between personal life and social life. As per the law of nature, you can follow idealism in your personal life, but in social life it is impossible. This is

because of differences between and among people, clashes of interest, and so on. So the Islamic formula is: Adopt idealism in your personal life, but in social affairs accept the status quo. Be an idealist in your personal life and a status quoist in social, including family, life.

Why, you might ask? This is because there is no rival in my personal life. I am the owner of my personal life and can adopt any kind of idealism that appeals to me. But in society, including one's family, there are other persons. Their tastes, interests, ideologies, ways of thinking and so on may be different from mine. So, to avoid clashing with them I need to adopt status quoism there. This is the Islamic approach. Paradise is not the monopoly of any group. Muslims will be judged in the same manner in which others will be judged. There is no discrimination in divine law in this matter. This is very clear in the Quran. (4 : 123) □



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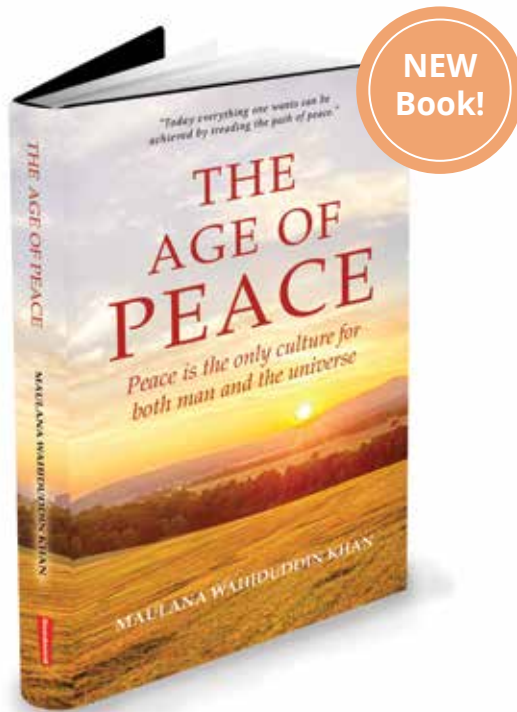
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