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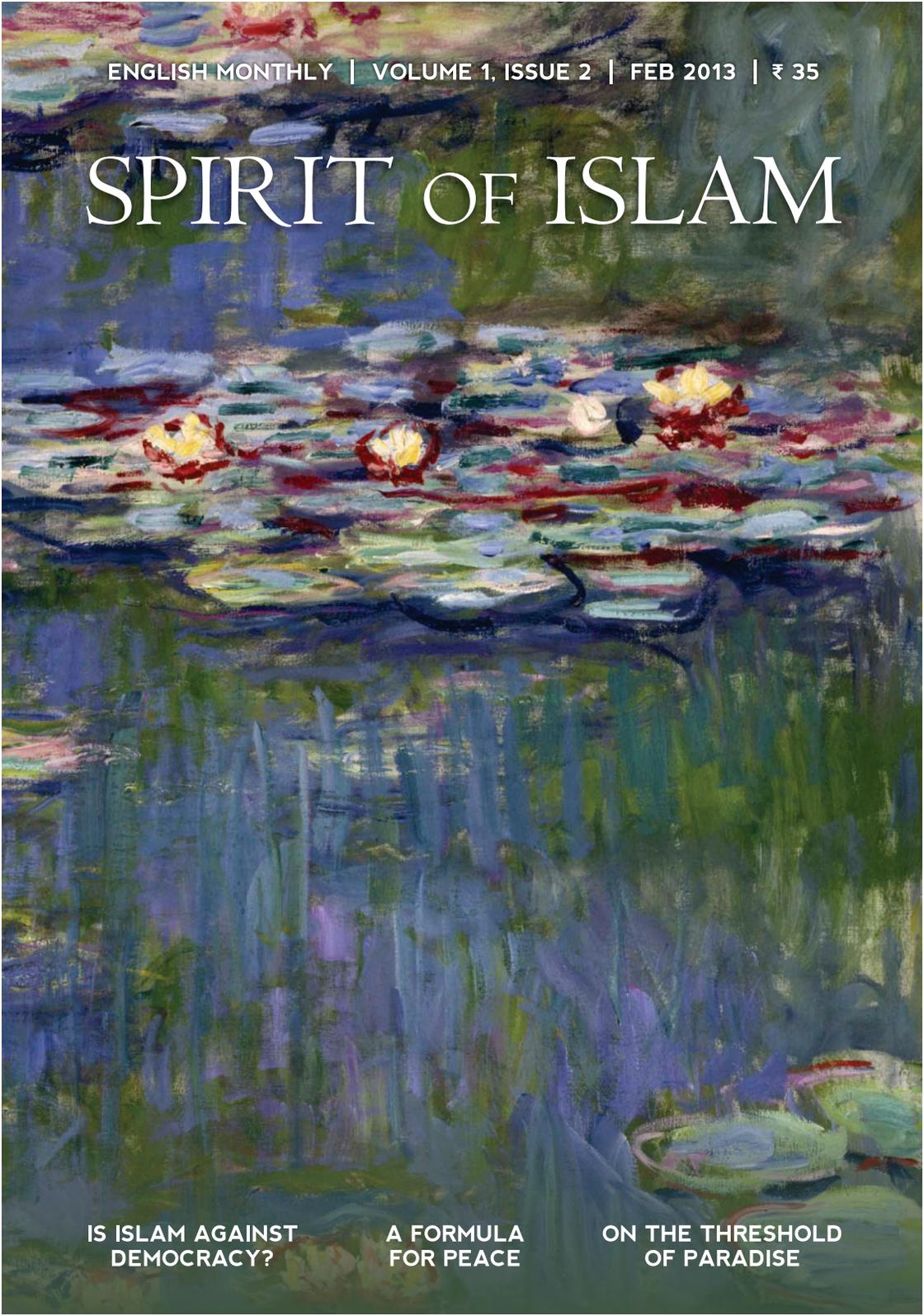
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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

IS ISLAM AGAINST
DEMOCRACY?

A FORMULA
FOR PEACE

ON THE THRESHOLD
OF PARADISE

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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Spiritual Living

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2, FEBRUARY 2013

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WELCOME

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second issue of 'Spirit of Islam', a monthly spiritual message, continuing in the tradition of its predecessors, 'The Spiritual Message' and 'Al-Risala English'.

This is a magazine for the discerning individual, who stops to contemplate the myriad multitude of choices available, before deciding on a course of action. It aims at helping individuals discover, for themselves, answers to their questions on life and beyond — questions that have always confronted us but which we have largely ignored as we continue our race towards material gain. Questions such as — why am I here, what will happen to me after I die, what is my purpose in life, why is there so much injustice in this world, is there any meaning in life, and did this Universe happen by chance.

Through the pages of this magazine, we hope to take readers on a spiritual journey to find meaning, to provide guidance and to discover our Creator, in order to achieve total peace and a God-oriented life. It presents concepts of spirituality and peace, wisdom from the learned; and guidance from the Creator, from the scriptures and the teachings of the prophets. It presents the true understanding and interpretation of contemporary issues. On reading without the shackles of pre-conditioning, open-minded seekers of the Truth will find food for thought.

This is a contemporary magazine. All articles are based on sound principles of reason and science with a particular emphasis on the intention and spirit of Islam rather than the form or the ritual. All the articles have been either written by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, translated from his Urdu writings, or developed under his guidance.

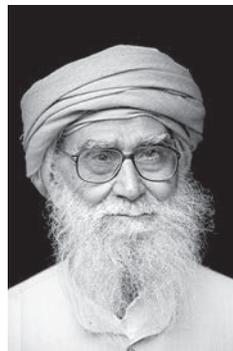
Feedback is welcome and appreciated, and can be sent by email to feedback@thespiritofislam.org or by post to our Bangalore office.

Happy reading!

Aijaz Ahmed
Associate Editor

FROM THE CHIEF EDITOR'S DESK

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



THE recent brutal violation of the young girl we call Nirbhaya — the fearless one, has shaken the whole country, compelling us to examine the life we lead and the values we believe in.

Any kind of violence perpetrated on another is not a sign of power; it is a pointer to weakness and deficient character that comes from a lack of direction or purpose in life. This in turn could be the result of various factors. In this case, there was absolutely no respect for a fellow human being's dignity or life.

One day in 1893, Swami Vivekananda was walking down a street in Chicago clad in two pieces of untailed saffron cloth. At that time this was a strange sight in America. A lady who was walking on the same street saw Swamiji, and said to her husband, "I don't think this man is a gentleman."

Swami Vivekananda, who overheard the remark, walked up to her and politely said: "Excuse me Madam, in your country the tailor makes a man a gentleman; but in my country, character makes a man a gentleman."

A gentleman is, as a gentleman does — it is not about what he wears. We need, now more than ever, to revive this spirit in India. We must conduct ourselves in such a way that we uphold human dignity and the sanctity of life, realising our potential as a spiritual superpower. People of every group and organisation in India, outraged by this criminal assault on

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

Nirbhaya are now expressing their support for a common cause — a crime-free India; to create a value based, law-abiding society, where human dignity is preserved, and where we may present a good example to other nations. After independence, our country's leaders tried to bring about reform in India. One of their easiest attempts at reform was paper activism, that is, legislation. Laws can be written on paper, but these are ineffective unless efforts are made sincerely in other directions. For true reform, change must come from within society itself. Both the Parliament and State assemblies have been actively involved in enacting laws, to the extent that now we are living in a jungle of laws.

In addition, in India there are numerous human rights activists fighting for justice and the right denied or deprived to others. But it is seldom that we find a person or organisation which engages in human duties activism. This has created a society that is rights-conscious as different from one that is duty-conscious. A rights-conscious person only knows his/her own needs, whereas a duty-conscious person thinks about the needs of society. That is why crimes flourish in a rights-conscious society; whereas in a duty-conscious society, crimes are kept in check.

As a Gandhian, I can say that peaceful activism is not merely a method; peace is power. We need to start a peaceful movement aimed at reviving positive human values. In Gandhian terms, it is only non-violent activism that can lead us to the next cherished goal: that of making our country a spiritual India.

If we want respect for ourselves we have to respect others. Overcome your base instincts and realise your potential as a human being to lead a life of non-violence, by following the precept of divine character. Conscience is the strongest check against wrongdoing. Anyone who wants to live as an honest, upright person must keep guard and heed his conscience or moral sensitivity. Keeping one's conscience alive is the only way to maintain a peaceful character and doing so is the beginning of a spiritual awakening.

Violence results from a feeling of deprivation and negativism, while peace results from positivism and a sense of discovery. Violence must, in principle, be discarded absolutely and peace must be adopted absolutely. This is the only way towards a spiritual awakening and a new India.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan
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RELIGION AND SCIENTIFIC REASONING

MANY people are under the impression that religious truths cannot be proved scientifically. Religion infers truths from human experience, exactly as scientists deduce facts on the basis of logical reasoning.

In ancient times water was considered to be nothing more than plain water. But when the microscope was invented in the 19th century, and water closely examined, a wealth of life in the form of countless bacteria, was discovered. In the same way, we used to think that there were only as many stars in the sky as could be seen with the naked eye. But modern-day telescopes have led to the discovery of far more stars than can be seen with unaided human vision.

**Religious creeds are based on belief in the unseen;
that which cannot be directly observed or experienced,
only inferred.**

These two examples show the difference between ancient and modern times. Modern research has shown with certainty that there are many more realities beyond the world man could understand when he was limited to the sphere of simple observation. But these new discoveries so excited those who were making them that they made another claim — that reality is that which can be directly observed; that which we cannot experience or observe is mere hypothesis, and does not exist.

In the nineteenth century this claim was made with great enthusiasm. It was most damaging to religion. Religious creeds are based on belief in the unseen; that which cannot be directly observed or experienced. For this reason many people came to think of religion as hypothetical and unreal.

Modern research however, has completely changed this state of affairs. Advanced study has shown that there is more to life than meets the eye — many of the great realities of life lie beyond our comprehension at present.

According to Bertrand Russell, the British philosopher and logician, there are two forms of knowledge — knowledge of things and knowledge of truths. Only ‘things’ can be directly observed, ‘truths’ can only be understood by indirect observation, or, in other words, inference. The existence of light, gravity, magnetism and nuclear energy in the universe is an undisputed fact, but man cannot directly observe these things. He knows them only by their effects. Man discovers certain ‘things’ from which he infers the existence of ‘truths’.

**Only ‘things’ can be directly observed;
‘truths’ can only be understood by inference.**

This change in the concept of knowledge, which occurred in the twentieth century, changed the whole situation radically. Man was forced to accept the existence of things which he could not directly see and only indirectly experience. With this intellectual revolution the difference between seen and unseen reality disappeared. Invisible objects became as important as visible objects. Man was compelled to accept that indirect, or inferential argument, was academically and intellectually as sound as direct argument.

This change in the concept of knowledge has, in the present age, made divine reasoning truly scientific. For instance, the greatest argument for religion is what philosophers call the argument from design. Nineteenth century scholars, in their zeal, did not accept this reasoning. To them it was an inferential argument which could not be accepted academically. But in the present age this objection has been invalidated. Nowadays man is compelled to infer the existence of a designer of the universe from the existence of design in the universe, just as he accepts the theory of the flow of electrons from the movement of a wheel.

Bertrand Russell throws some light on this matter. In the preface to his book ‘Why I Am Not A Christian’, he writes:

“I think all the great religions of the world — Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Communism — are both untrue and harmful. It is evident as a matter of logic that, since they disagree, not more than one of them can be true. With very few exceptions, the religion which a man accepts is that of the community in which he lives, which makes it obvious that the influence of environment is what has led him to accept

the religion in question. It is true that scholastics invented what they professed to be logical arguments proving the existence of God, and that these arguments, or others of a similar tenor, have been accepted by many eminent philosophers, but the logic to which these traditional arguments appealed is of an antiquated Aristotelian sort which is now rejected by practically all logicians except such as are Catholics. There is one argument that is not purely logical. I mean the argument from design. This argument, however, was destroyed by Darwin; and in any case, could only be made logically acceptable at the cost of abandoning God's omnipotence.

Apart from logical cogency, there is to me something a little odd about the ethical valuations of those who think that an omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent Deity, after preparing the ground by many millions of years of lifeless nebulae, would consider Himself adequately rewarded by the final emergence of Hitler and Stalin and the H-bomb."

Scientific reasoning upholds the veracity of religious truths.

Russell offers the idea that the death and destruction perpetrated by man are grounds for rejecting an omnipotent and benevolent God. However, this death and destruction is a result of the misuse of the God-given freedom of man, rather than the direct intent of God's plan. Considering this, the argument from design is logically acceptable. We can now look at Russell's rejection of the argument keeping Darwin's theory in mind.

Arguing the existence of a designer from design is a logically accepted scientific argument. It is the very argument which science uses to prove anything. The rejection of this argument would only be acceptable if Darwin's theory was itself scientifically established. But scientific research has proved Darwinism to be mere hypothesis, rather than established scientific fact. Hence, the rejection of that argument on the basis of Darwinism is groundless.

Therefore we can say with certainty that the veracity of religious truths can be confirmed by scientific reasoning.



STRESS IS A GOOD SERVANT

EVERYONE, young or old, complains of stress or tension — a common phenomenon of our times. There are several centres established in order to enable de-stressing but these provide, at most, only temporary relief. None of them offer any permanent solution. Tension is only the negative term for a positive phenomenon. What is generally called tension is, in fact, a sign of a healthy life. It is not an evil but a blessing in disguise.

Your mind has unlimited capacity, but this capacity, which is a gift of nature, is in the form of potential. You need to turn this potential into actuality. How should you go about doing this? Your potential can be realized only through being exposed to different kinds of stress or tension. Stress awakens our mind; stress activates the natural processes which lead to intellectual development. Stress plays a role in developing our personality.

Stress awakens our mind; stress activates the natural processes which lead to intellectual development.

In volleyball, there are two players — the spiker and the setter. The spiker has the key role of hitting or spiking in this game but he needs a setter, for without a setter, no spiker can play his part properly. It is this process of setting or boosting which is going on in the life of every human being. When you face stress of any kind, don't despair. Take it as a challenge. Take it as an intellectual booster. Stress is a positive sign, a healthy activity. It unfolds your mental potential.

All great men have been faced with great problems. But these problems only increased their creativity, and became the source of revealing a fresh dimension to their personality. The English poet, John Milton, has several major works to his credit. His masterpiece was 'Paradise Lost' which he wrote after he had lost his eyesight. Almost all creative people have had to surmount similar difficulties.

When you come face to face with stress, don't take it as a negative phenomenon. Look upon it as a challenge and try to meet it. You have to activate your mind in a positive direction. Don't lose your positivity; don't resort to the language of complaint.

When there is stress in your life, face it as a normal phenomenon and try to continue with your normal routine. Then, very soon, you will find that your stress has propelled you towards your betterment. And you will surely find that your post-stress situation is an improvement on your pre-stress situation.

Mahatma Gandhi was once subjected to humiliating treatment in South Africa. Prior to this, he was an ordinary lawyer, but as a result of this incident, he went on to become the 'Father of the Nation'.

There is no end to opportunities in this world.

When you perceive an opportunity, and you try to grasp it, and for some reason you fail to achieve your goal; then you might suffer a feeling of tension. But you should know that there is no end to opportunities in this world. If you fail to avail of one opportunity, then don't take it as the end of everything. There are many other opportunities in life — in fact, the world is full of them. So, if you fail in the first instance, then try to avail of the second or the third opportunity, and so on. There is no full stop to opportunities — only commas! So, instead of allowing yourself to be overwhelmed by tension, adopt the formula — 'try, try, try again'.

This is the formula for de-stressing yourself. Living in worry or stopping your creativity is not the solution. Instead of stopping your thinking processes, enhance them and you will soon discover that the stress you felt was, in fact, acting as an intellectual booster in your life.



Keeping Calm In The Face Of Adversity —

*"It is only if he does not lose his nerve
and keeps his mind open to what is practical
that he will be able to overcome
the obstacles in his path".*

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

ERNEST Psichari (1883-1914), a French writer, was in his youth a free-thinker and an atheist. But later he reverted to Christianity. Grandson of the famous historian, Ernest Renan, Psichari is ranked highly among those who made an effort to bring about a spiritual awakening in France at the turn of the twentieth century. One of his sayings has been rendered in English in these words:

“Silence is a bit of heaven that comes down to earth.”

Silence is the language of nature. When one observes silence one finds oneself at one with nature, and surely there is no higher plane on which the human soul may exist.

Man cannot, of course, remain silent in the absolute sense. When he appears to be silent, he is so for others, not for himself. Remaining silent as far the external world goes, he starts conversing with his internal world.

Observing silence is a great act. When one is silent, one’s attention is diverted more to ‘heavenly’ matters than to ‘worldly’ ones. One’s ears are turned more to the whispers of angels than to those of men. Man’s focus becomes his own self rather than extraneous matters. He eschews superficiality and engages himself with deeper realities. When man speaks, he is in a limited domain, but when he is silent he finds himself in the unlimited vastness of the world.



Law of Nature

“For men, opportunities will never cease.”

Just as morning is always followed by night,
so does success inevitably follow failure.

However, just as the earth’s unceasing revolutions
are necessary for the cycle of night and day,
so must man be unremitting in his struggle
to reach his final goal.

LIKENESS OF GOD

A LIKENESS of God is to be found in man, for is not the existence of man a proof of the existence of God? What is the nature of God? He is a live, self-sufficient Being, with a mind that is all-knowing, eyes that are all-seeing and ears that are all-hearing. His power is of such infinitude that it reaches to the furthestmost corners of the universe, and no object of His will is too great or too small to escape its force. And quite independent of all objects of creation, God has His ego.

Man may not, like God, be omniscient and omnipotent, but he certainly thinks, sees, hears, has a will, acts of his own volition and understands quite precisely what is meant by the 'ego' — the 'I'. To believe in God is to have faith in a higher form of the 'I'. Man's experience of himself, his attributes, his characteristics, make it possible for him to apprehend the eternal Being who possesses these very attributes and characteristics, but to a superlative degree. This is the Being whom we call God.

If one is sure of one's own existence, why should one not be sure of the existence of God? Here am 'I', sitting in one place, observing the universe. Why, then, should there not be a Being greater than I am, situated elsewhere in the universe, watching over it? We ourselves direct the movements of machines in outer space by means of remote control, so why should we have any difficulty in accepting that there is a God who controls the universe by His own invisible system?

Man metes out punishments and gives rewards according to his own concept of justice, so why should there not be an all-powerful God who administers reward and retribution according to his own, unique concept of justice?

Indeed, believing in God is no different from believing in one's own self. It is no more difficult for man to accept the existence of God than it is for him to accept his own existence. Belief in God is doubtless an extraordinary feat of the imagination, but it is no more extraordinary than believing in man. Once one has accepted one such extraordinary phenomenon, what is there to prevent one from accepting another?



A FORMULA FOR PEACE

THE history of peace shows that there can be two periods of peace: political peace and non-political peace. In ancient times people were ruled by kings in almost every part of the world. Under a king's reign, only one kind of peace was possible, that is, political peace.

In previous centuries we find at least three models of this kind of peace. These models are known as Pax Romana, Pax Britannica, and Pax Islamica. These models of peace successfully worked in ancient times, but in the present democratic age, this political peace model is not acceptable by man — America is one such clear example. This country wanted to establish what may be called Pax Americana in the present world through political power, but it failed. Pax Americana could not be translated into real life.

According to the law of nature, justice is not a part of peace; it is the result of your own efforts.

Now the desire of everyone and every nation to have peace seems to be a distant dream. The reason for this is that people have made justice a prerequisite for peace; they say "We want peace, but we want peace with justice."

This association of justice with peace is extraneous and unnatural. In this world of nature, only the laws of nature can prevail, anything that is unnatural cannot be materialised. According to the law of nature, justice is not a part of peace; it is the result of your own efforts.

The natural formula of peace is based on the principle: Peace for the sake of peace, So, first of all we have to establish peace and that at any cost. According to this law of nature, peace will certainly open the doors of opportunity and by making the most of those opportunities, you can achieve justice, peace or any other goal.

This principle was successfully demonstrated by the Prophet of Islam in the form of Sulh al Hudaibiya or the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah. In fact Sulh al Hudaibiya was a peace agreement between Muslims and their opponents. The Prophet of Islam finalised this peace

agreement by accepting injustice. At that time the Prophet and his companions wanted to visit Makkah and perform Umrah, but they were prevented from doing so. The Prophet dropped his Umrah plans and finalised the peace agreement by accepting all the conditions laid down unilaterally by the opponents. As a consequence, the companions of the Prophet were very disheartened: they considered it a degrading treaty. One of the companions said at that time, "Why are we accepting such a humiliating agreement?"

However, soon after this peace agreement was finalised, God Almighty revealed this verse in the Quran —

"Truly, we have granted you a clear victory." THE QURAN, 48: 1

Why does the Quran call it a "clear victory" when it was obviously a setback for the Prophet and his companions? This 'victory' was in terms of potential victory rather than immediate actual victory. The Sulh al Hudaibiya agreement stopped all kinds of hostility between the two sides and opened up the doors of opportunity. After this it became possible to conduct a dialogue and, have an intellectual exchange, between the two parties. In other words, peace opened the doors for the Prophet to be able to spread his message throughout Arabia.

This prophetic example shows us the way to peace. It tells us how peace can be established and what actions must be taken in such situations of conflict. It is to detach peace from justice. It is to establish peace at any cost. It is to adopt peace for the sake of peace; to re-plan every strategy concentrating on opportunities and not on justice.

Justice is an indirect result of peace and not the direct outcome, so the formula for peace is: establish peace by accepting injustice for a temporary period. Peace will open the doors of opportunity and by availing the opportunities the goal of justice can be reached. The only formula of achieving justice is to accept injustice at the outset; then you will be able to achieve justice in the future by reaping the benefits of peace.



PRESENT WORLD AND THE NEXT

ANY farmer who would like to reap the harvest on the day of sowing the seeds, shall lose the seeds and be deprived of the harvest. The same is the case with this world and the post-death world of tomorrow. The world of today is a place for action, and the world of tomorrow is the place for reaping the harvest or receiving reward. The one who wants to achieve the 'reward' in today's world will be at the price that he will not be able to perform the desired task and will miss the only opportunity of building the world of tomorrow.

Any farmer who would like to reap the harvest on the day of sowing the seeds shall lose the seeds and be deprived of the harvest.

Man desires to achieve in the present world, what is to be achieved in tomorrow's world. This is the reason he loses both of them. The wise man is the one who buys tomorrow's world at the cost of today's world, rather than be embroiled in today's world thus depriving himself from finding a place in the world of tomorrow.

If you try to find all the comfort of home during a journey, you will never succeed in achieving this. The matter of today's world and tomorrow's world can be understood by an example.

Today's world has been made by God for action (performance) and tomorrow's world for achieving the results of the performance of those actions. Today's world is a journey, and tomorrow's world is its final destination.

Desiring to achieve the results in today's world itself, the planning of one's actions will all go totally amiss. Similarly, desiring the comforts available only at the destination, during the journey, would impair the entire journey.

A wise man is one who understands the difference between today's world and tomorrow's; who does not desire in this world what is to be achieved in the post-death world.

A man ought to be a realist. He must not chase after his desires because desires lead man nowhere but destruction.

**The wise man is the one who buys tomorrow's world
at the cost of today's world.**

Every man's heart is an ocean of desires. These desires are not wrong in themselves; but the place for the fulfillment of these desires is tomorrow's world, and not the world of today.



NOTICE

for the subscribers of
SPIRITUAL MESSAGE

Since '**Spiritual Message**' has been discontinued from Dec 2012, you will continue to receive '**Spirit of Islam**' until your subscription to 'Spiritual Message' expires.

You are requested to confirm your address, and the estimated date of expiry of your current subscription with an email to **subscription@thespiritofislam.org**, with the words '**Spiritual Message**' in the subject line.

You may also send a letter to our office in Bangalore.

After the expiry of your 'Spiritual Message' subscription, if you wish to continue receiving 'Spirit of Islam', you can subscribe with an email to **subscription@thespiritofislam.org** following subscription instructions on page 47.

RELIGION

THERE are two aspects to our world. One pertains to the visible world and the other to the invisible world. The visible world can be likened to the tip of an iceberg. Only the tip or a very tiny part of the iceberg is observable while the major part of it remains hidden from the eyes, submerged within the water. It is only religion that enables us to be able to cross the surface of the sea, deeper into the ocean beds and see the major part of this iceberg.

Repeatedly we come across such occasions in life, when man feels he is helpless. He feels the very ends of life have slipped away from his hands. At this point in time it is only religion that appears as a saviour. It saves his sinking ship. At that juncture religion becomes a source of courage and conviction.

**Religious man, by nature,
is a predictable human being.
One can reliably predict his behaviour in advance.**

A religion is the source of all positive ethics. Religion gives man the power to forgive the offender. Religion raises him above greed. The feeling of envy is uprooted. He treats people with tolerance. He honours people without discrimination. He saves himself from committing injustice, always sticking to the path of justice. He treats even his enemies with justice and fairness. He contributes positively to society, becoming a giver rather than just a taker.

Religion makes one a man of principle, He becomes a man of principled character. He develops self-control and self discipline. Religious man, by nature, is a predictable human being. One can reliably predict his behaviour in advance.

A religious person is a serious-minded and honest person. He is ever ready to appraise himself. A self-corrective mechanism grows within him, and this quality keeps rejuvenating his personality.

How does religion produce these superior and refined qualities in man? The reason for this is that the bounds of religion are connected with

God, who is the source of all goodness. God thus becomes a source of inspiration for everyone.

Religion makes man God-oriented. It produces God-oriented thinking. His life is a God-oriented life. This is the thing which makes a religious person unconquerable. A religious person develops communion with God and such a person becomes strong and powerful.

Here is an incident which shows in symbolic language how a religious person — a person who has complete faith in God — becomes an unconquerable man. He is a person whose peace or inner calm is undisturbed even by storm waves.

Once, a ship sailed from the American coast for Africa. It was still on its way when it was hit by a severe storm. The ship began to shake violently. All the passengers panicked and started running helter-skelter. It seemed that the ship would sink at any moment.

**A religion is the source of all positive ethics.
Religion gives man the power to forgive the offender.**

In this hour of panic one passenger caught sight of a child in a corner of the ship, playing with her doll. The passenger asked the child, "Do you know what is going to happen?" The child asked in all innocence, "Why, what is the matter?" The passenger replied: "Our ship has been hit by a storm and it is going to sink." The child continued to play with her doll and replied: "You know, my father is the captain of the ship. He is not going to let it sink."

This incident relating to the child gives us a picture of a religious person. A truly religious person never falls prey to frustration. He does not get disturbed in times of crisis. He never loses courage. He always lives in hope. In every situation he is in a position to say: God Almighty is the captain of my ship. He is not going to let it sink.



THE HUMAN POTENTIAL

THE Disaster Research Centre at the Ohio State University, which was active there from 1963 to 1985, studied over one hundred different calamities affecting human beings on a vast scale. It was discovered that at moments of crisis, an extraordinary new potential develops in people which saves them from succumbing to disasters and their aftermath.

Perhaps heroism, not panic or shock, is the right word to describe the most common behaviour of human beings in times of disaster.

In 1961, for example, Texas was struck by a severe coastal storm, but less than half of the inhabitants opted to vacate the area. Over 50 percent of them had the confidence to stay on in spite of the storm warnings issued to them four days in advance. Subsequently, in 1971, a big dam was weakened considerably following an earthquake, which seriously endangered the lives of 70,000 people, but at that very critical time only 7 percent of the population chose to leave their hearths and homes.

Such research has also revealed that the victims of such disasters still maintain high hopes for the future. The citizens of the two affected areas of Texas, having witnessed the destruction caused by horrible floods, were interviewed about what they felt were their future prospects. Surprisingly, less than ten percent expressed apprehension and misgivings. The rest of them, irrespective of the large-scale destruction, were hopeful about their future.

The Centre concluded the report of the research it had conducted on disasters by saying, "The reality of events suggests that human beings are amazingly controlled and resilient in the face of adversity. Perhaps heroism, not panic or shock, is the right word to describe their most common behaviour in times of disaster."

The Creator has endowed His creature, man, with extraordinary capabilities, one of which is his capacity to plan his life anew with

tremendous vigour, even when threatened with total annihilation. Man can do more than compensate for his losses.

The discovery of this natural, hidden potential in man serves to teach a great lesson, that is, that no individual, whether singly or as part of a group, who suffers trials and tribulations, should ever waste a moment's time in lamenting and grieving over his losses.

**The creator has endowed His creature, man,
with extraordinary capabilities.**

Instead, he should press his God-given capabilities into service to reconstruct his life. It is quite possible that the very circumstances in which he seemed to be heading towards complete annihilation, could serve to unfold a new and brighter phase of his existence.



Excellent Character

*If you are well-mannered towards
those whose views are similar to yours,
you may be said to exhibit
fairly good character.*

*But, if you behave properly with those holding
divergent views from you or who criticise you,
then you deserve to be credited with
having excellent character.*

IS ISLAM AGAINST DEMOCRACY?

THE answer is in the negative. Islam itself is a system of democracy, not only in political matters but also in other social matters. There is a clear direction in the Quran in this regard. The Quran has this to say — Affairs of the believers are decided by mutual consultation. (42: 38)

It means that in every social issue Muslims must follow the method of mutual consultation. If they reach a consensus, then it is good; otherwise the matter will be decided by the majority. Democracy is another name for the rule of majority, and the same principle is accepted in Islam.

**Islam is a system of democracy;
not only politically, but also socially.**

The Prophet of Islam used to adopt this principle in every matter. He used to gather people whenever he was faced with a problem. He asked them to give their opinions, and the matter was settled only after discussion with his companions. It is on record that sometimes the Prophet accepted the opinion of the majority, even though it was against his personal opinion. One such example is found at the time of the battle of Uhud in 2 A.H. During this battle the Prophet felt that they should stay back in Madinah and defend themselves, whereas his companions were of the opinion that they should go on to the outskirts. The prophet agreed to the opinion of the majority.

The Prophet of Islam said —

“As you are, so will be your rulers.”

HADITH REPORTED BY AL-BAIHAQI

It means that the government will be formed by the people's opinion. That is, the democratic process will determine who will be the ruler of the nation. The government cannot be formed by an individual; it is subject to the opinion of the majority. The well-known dictum of democracy — “Government of the people, by the people, for the people” is also accepted by Islam.

It is very important to know that ‘khurooj’ or political revolt is ‘haraam’

— forbidden in Islam. If a government has been established by a democratic process, it has the right to rule till the end of the specified term. No person or group has the right to launch a movement against it to unseat that government.

Islam believes in persuasion, not coercion. This principle is applicable to all fields of life, both religious and secular. And certainly politics is not an exception. A verse in the Quran says —

“There is no compulsion in religion.” THE QURAN, 2: 256

An Islamic state is not a theocratic state. Islam does not subscribe to the notion that there should be a religious group, which alone has the right to rule. Theocratic rule is like the rule of a religious dynasty; but in Islam there is no room for such a dynastic rule, neither in terms of family nor in terms of clergy.

Islam differentiates between religious creed and political system. According to Islam, religious creed is subject to its eternal teachings and there is no compromise in religious belief; but the political system in Islam in practice is a secular system, not a religious one. If the society is a society of believers, then the government will be formed according to their belief; but if the society is a mixed society or is not ready to accept religion in political affairs, then Islam will adjust to the social will. This was demonstrated by the Prophet of Islam in his life.

Islam differentiates between religious creed and political system.

The Prophet of Islam started his mission in 610 A.D. in the city of Makkah. The Makkans were ready to accept him as their ruler. But he refused because at that time the majority in Makkah comprised of non-believers. He, therefore, did not interfere with the political system of the city and accepted the situational political status quo. Then thirteen years after he migrated to Madina, he was able to establish a city state. The people of Madina appointed him as the head of the state and he accepted it, because the majority of the town had accepted the Prophet's mission. This is the political spirit of Islam that was demonstrated by the Prophet of Islam himself.



HUMAN DESTINY

ONCE during one of his missionary journeys Billy Graham, the well-known evangelist received a message from an American billionaire who asked to meet him as soon as possible. Accordingly, Billy Graham cancelled his other appointments and set out to meet the billionaire.

As soon as he reached the billionaire's home, he was ushered into a separate room where the billionaire on his deathbed was waiting for him. On meeting him, the billionaire said: "You see, I am an old man. Life has lost all meaning. I am going to take a fateful leap into the unknown. Young man, can you give me a ray of hope?"

**Everyone, be he rich or poor, great or small;
is ultimately faced with this same desire –
to build a world of his choice.**

This is not just the story of one billionaire; rather it is the story of all human beings. Everyone, be he rich or poor, great or small; is ultimately faced with this same feeling. Each person wants to build a world of his choice. He devotes all his time towards this end, till the final hours of his life come and he leaves this world with the feeling of helplessness knowing that he could not achieve what he wanted to.

What is the reason for this? Man is the only creature in this vast universe, who cherishes countless desires in his heart. Are these desires ever going to be fulfilled? Will everyone finally be buried in the graveyard of his or her own desires? Every man and woman fosters a world of dream in his or her mind. Is this world of beautiful dreams only there to remain a dream, and never to be realized? Everyone grows an orchard of beautiful desires, but no-one has the good fortune to enter this beautiful orchard. Why this contradiction?

Such contradiction do not exist anywhere else in this vast universe. The inanimate world, the plant world and the animal world are completely free from such contradiction. Then why is this contradiction found only in the human world? The reason is that there is a basic difference between man and the rest of the universe. That is, man's life is divided

into two stages — the stage of life before death and the stage of life after death. Unlike man, all other things in the universe have no stage beyond this present world. They are meant only to come into existence, and then be obliterated one day forever.

The truth is that whatever has been destined for man in the second stage of his life, he desires it in the first stage itself. However, this is not possible because of a unique law in nature applicable only to man, a law, which is not meant for anything else in the universe. Man's life is governed by the principle of action and reward. That is, the performance of actions in the first stage before death; and the receiving of reward commensurate to those actions, in the second stage after death.

**The world before death is the stage of
sowing the seed; and the world after death
is the stage of finding its result.**

This law is the key to understanding human life. Only after fully understanding this law will man's life become meaningful. This law provides a complete answer to all the questions regarding human life. It gives us a satisfactory explanation of man's life in this world. According to this law, the world before death is the stage of sowing the seed; and the world after death is the stage of finding its result — lush green trees, laden with flowers and fruits.

What man therefore ought to do, in this first stage of his life is concentrate all his attention on the proper cultivation of the seed, instead of making futile efforts to find the fruits and flowers. Those who do so will find everything they desire in the world to come — all those things that they had failed to find in the world they leave behind.



*Life is a challenge for both men and women.
Those who know this will see this challenge as a ladder
to progress, and by climbing this ladder will reach
the higher stage destined for them.*

QURAN: THE SACRED BOOK OF ISLAM

THE QURAN, according to Muslim belief, is a revealed book — it is not authored by a human being, but is the true word of God in human language. A medium sized book so far as its length is concerned, it comprises 114 chapters or *surahs* (77,439 words). Its revelation to the Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace, through the Angel Gabriel, began in A.D. 610, while the Prophet was sitting in seclusion in the cave of Hira at the top of the Mountain of Light, two miles from Makkah. These scriptures were not revealed at one point of time. Their various parts were revealed as and when the occasion demanded. The entire process was completed over a period of 23 years, the last passage being revealed to the Prophet while he was addressing a gathering at Mount Arafat on the occasion of his last Haj in A.D. 622. The entire volume was later compiled in Medina during the last days of the Prophet.

The target of the Quran is to awaken the thinking of the individual. Changing the system is not the Quran's direct objective.

Since the Quran came into existence long before the days of the printing press, there were only two ways of preserving it — either by committing the entire text to memory, or writing it down. That is why there have always been a great number of *hafiz* (those who committed the entire Quran to memory) in every age, right from the moment of the Quran's first revelation. The earliest written copies are still available in different museums, one of these being in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The Quran, addressed directly to mankind, tells us of God's scheme for human existence — that man is placed on this earth for the purpose of being tested. The freedom he has here has not been given to him as a matter of right, but as a means to allow him to prove his moral fibre. It is the outcome of this test which will ultimately decide man's eternal fate. It is asserted in the holy book that human beings are eternal creatures, yet only an infinitesimal part of their lifespan has been assigned to the present world, while the remainder has been ordained for the Hereafter.

As we learn from the scriptures, all the previously revealed books had been sent by God so that man might be informed of the nature of his life. The Quran, the last of the revealed books, endorses all the revealed books which preceded it. But this endorsement applies to them only in their original, pristine versions. The religious scriptures preceding the Quran were — as is claimed by their followers — divine in origin. But from the point of view of academic authenticity they have lost their original credibility. This is due to alteration, deletion and interpolation. According to the Quran, the only authentic version of God's message to mankind is that revealed by Him to His final Prophet.

**Social equilibrium can be maintained only
if conscience prevails over the ego.**

The study of the Quran tells us that it is individual-based rather than system-oriented. That is, the actual target of the holy book is to change the thinking of the individual. Changing the system is not the Quran's direct objective. For the system is subservient to the individual and not vice versa. That is why the utmost emphasis is placed on inculcating right thinking in man. Yet, it is not the method of the Quran to set out everything in advance, in detail. It rather encourages individuals to think for themselves along the proper lines, so that they may discover for themselves the great truths of life. In educational terminology this is called the discovery method.

Islamic teachings can be summed up under two basic headings — believing in One God and worshipping Him alone; regarding all human beings as equal and according equal rights to all.

In brief, monotheism and justice for all — the Quran enshrines these basic teachings, dealing with them in their abstract and practical forms, but for a detailed application of their wisdom, one must go to the *Hadith* (the sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad).

As far as social life is concerned, the essence of Islamic teaching is that God has granted freedom to everyone. This freedom in itself demands that people should lead their lives with proper restraint.

For if freedom is exercised without restraint, it will inevitably result in friction, outright clashes and the descent of society into chaos. Social equilibrium can be maintained only if conscience prevails over

the ego. In social life, our actions elicit good or evil depending upon whether we have activated the ego or the conscience of the person or persons concerned.

**The Quran tells us that we are placed
on this earth to be tested.**

Whenever one initiates any undertaking, the Quran states expressly that one should begin by uttering the name of God. One thus always reminds oneself, at the outset, of God's attributes of benevolence and compassion. It is also a way of determining that all projects will be launched not with personal will but with divine intentions, and that all actions stemming therefrom will be merciful rather than exploitative in nature. The most frequently repeated invocation in the Quran is — "In the name of God, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful." The recurrence of this phrase no less than 114 times is in itself a clear indication of how important it is.



Sailing Safely

*We must never lose sight of the fact
that we are not lone travellers on this earth.*

*There are always others who are trying to race ahead of us
in this world of competition. The resulting situation can be
approached in two entirely different ways.*

*One is to collide with anything which obstructs our path.
The other is to circumvent obstacles
and then to go on our way.*

*Clearly, the first is self-destructive, while the second, in avoiding
confrontations, is much more likely to prove advantageous.*

A ship which sails straight at a rock or an iceberg is doomed.

*It is the ship which veers temporarily off its course
to avoid the reefs which will eventually
sail safely into harbour.*

CONSISTENT CHARACTER

THE edifice of human civilization is really just an extension of nature — man takes simple matter and converts it into buildings, machines, factories, industrial plants and all the other artefacts of the modern world. What enables him to do this is the fact that all matter has been invested by nature with certain constant properties. Once man has discovered these natural properties, he is able to use them to his own advantage. These properties make up the character of a substance; they are absolutely predictable — everything in nature can be relied upon to act in a certain way. All the advances of human civilization are the result of this predictability. Any change in the properties of basic matter, or unpredictability in its character, would reduce the whole of human civilization to ruins.

**Society is only as good as
the individuals who constitute it.**

If we want to build a bridge across a river, we can use steel because we know we can rely on the strength of steel to hold up the bridge; if steel turned out to be as soft as wax the whole construction would crash into the water. For construction of buildings we use bricks and cement, which we are sure will solidify into a firm structure; if stones and cement were like a pile of sand, these buildings would collapse. We know that when a magnetic field and motion come together the resultant movement of electrons will produce electricity; if this did not happen, the world would suddenly be plunged into darkness.

Such occurrences would mean that things had lost their specific character and the building of civilization would then become impossible. Human civilization can only be fashioned when the things that are essential to it do what is expected of them — while they maintain their basic character. What good would an ice-factory be, for instance, if the water that was put into it turned into steam instead of ice? How could cars and other machines be produced if iron cast into furnaces refused to melt?

Just as the things which contribute to human civilization have to display certain properties for civilization to flourish, so too the individuals who constitute human society have to do what is expected of them for

society to run smoothly. They too have to maintain a certain character. The worth of all material objects is dependent upon their reliability in performing the functions that are expected of them. In the same way, a man's worth depends on his ability to maintain a consistent character under all conditions. There are certain attributes that constitute a human character; only if one displays these attributes can one be counted as a true human being.

If a person does not display the facets of human character that are expected of him, all one can say is that he has lost his human worth. A society made up of such people is doomed to discontentment and unrest. Society is only as good as the individuals who constitute it. The inevitable result of inconsistent and irregular character on the part of individuals, then, is instability in the society to which they belong.

Corruption of human society comes into being when its members break their promises instead of keeping them; when they are petty instead of open-minded; when they are miserly instead of generous; when they think only of themselves instead of society as a whole; when they are vindictive instead of forgiving, rebellious instead of accommodating; when they vainly pursue their own interests instead of acknowledging the rights of others; when they seek to put down other people instead of lending them a helping hand; when, in short, people fail to treat others as they would have others treat them.

A society will only prove to be strong if its members prove to be human beings in the real sense of the word — if they display the character that is expected of them as human beings. Where resolve is required they should remain as solid as steel, where pliability is required, as soft as running water. They should remain as still as stones when silence is expected of them, as firm as mountains when constancy is the order of the day. When strong initiatives are required, their enthusiasm should cascade like a torrent. It is such people, those who speak and act as true human beings, who constitute a strong and stable human society. Individuals of this nature are as indispensable to human society as commodities like fuel and steel are essential to human civilization.

If the forces that contribute to civilization did not do what is expected of them, then civilization as we know it could not survive; so too if people do not show consistency, reliability and predictability in their character, human society will crumble.

ON THE THRESHOLD OF PARADISE

WHAT is Paradise? There is no mystery about Paradise. It is a scientific fact just like any other accepted fact. In reality, Paradise is a transformation of the earth. As we know, the earth was initially an inchoate, molten mass, and then over time the surface of the earth cooled and became the crust, eventually taking the form of our world as we know it today. In a similar way, another transformation will take place in the future — but to a far greater extent — at that time, our earth will be turned into Paradise.

In this world, many things are brought into existence as a result of conversion. For example, rain results from the conversion of water vapour in the atmosphere into liquid water. A tree represents the conversion of a seed using the soil's nutrients. Machines are a conversion of raw materials such as iron and steel into complex mechanisms. The industrial world ensures the conversion of inert materials into socially useful commodities.

**Paradise is the natural culmination of creation
which at a certain point of time
had a definite beginning.**

In the same way, in future, conversion shall take place on a far grander scale. At that time, this far from ideal world will change into an ideal world. This in religious terms would be known as Paradise. This instance of conversion is referred to, in the Quran in the following verse:

“When the earth is turned into another earth.” THE QURAN, 14: 48

On our earth, conversion from one form or state into another is a repeated, continuous, known natural process — a normal everyday occurrence. This being so, believing in Paradise is the same as believing in the continuance of a predictable series of events. It is just like saying that the thousandth product is being delivered from a manufacturing plant that has already produced nine hundred and ninety nine of the same.

Paradise is not just a matter of religious belief or dogma. According to the eternal laws of nature, Paradise is a state which is bound to come into existence. A study of the laws governing earthly systems shows that the present world is undergoing a continuous evolutionary process, of which Paradise, logically, is the ultimate phase. Paradise is the natural culmination of a creation which at a certain point in time had a definite beginning.

**In comparison to the universe our earth is
infinitesimally smaller than a grain of sand.**

Astronomical studies show that the Universe is so incredibly vast, and expanding at such a rapid rate that, even with the use of the most powerful telescopes, its total dimensions have yet to be accurately estimated. In this immeasurably vast universe, the earth is an extremely tiny planet. In comparison to the universe our earth is infinitesimally smaller than a grain of sand.

Throughout the universe our earth is a very rare exception, in that it is the only place where exceptional things such as water, vegetation, an atmosphere of air and oxygen are present. If life can prevail on this earth, it is because of the impeccable life support systems that are functioning on it. On earth, there exist all those valuable elements by utilizing which man can, if he wills, build a civilization. It is and has been the task of humanity to convert this potential into reality.

It is quite evident that civilization, passing continuously from one stage of its history to another, is moving on from its initial state of development to progressive higher levels altogether. Many studies in the history of mankind or civilization will confirm this fact.

As the Quran puts it:

“You will surely move from one stage to another stage.”

THE QURAN, 84: 19-21

The evolution of history makes it clear that human civilization is continuously advancing along the path of progress and development. The result of such focused progress and sustainable development will be that which could be called a ‘Spiritual Civilization’, or Paradise.

The history of civilization shows that it has passed through three major phases, and now all the indications suggest that it is in the fourth and final stage of its journey. The three major phases of civilization are: The Stone Age; The Agricultural Age; The Industrial Age.

It is a matter of common knowledge that these phases of civilization have already taken place. Alvin Toffler, author of the bestseller, "Future Shock" published in 1970, says in his book that the fourth phase or probably the last period of civilization will take place in the near future. The author calls this fourth phase the Super-Industrial Age, which, when compared to the previous phases will be much more advanced. Therefore, in religious terms, it would be appropriate to consider this fourth phase as a spiritual civilization.

Let us briefly study the different periods of civilization. It was a time when man could only use whatever material was present on the earth in its original form. Of all the materials, stone was the most readily available as well as the most useful. Although many other things existed on earth, this material took pride of place as it was the most widely used so this phase came to be called the Stone Age. As far as early Stone Age Homo sapiens were concerned, they possessed the same natural qualities as the people of the present day. Research has shown that the human brain during the Stone Age civilization was no different from the human brain today. It was only because of a lack of knowledge that man at that time could not utilize his hidden potential.

**Research has shown that the human brain during
the Stone Age civilization was no different
from the human brain today.**

Then came the Agricultural period, during which man discovered more and more ways of harnessing nature. This age saw the development of irrigation, ploughing, the rearing and breeding of animals, and the use of iron and carts with wheels. In this way it was possible to lead a better life as compared to that of the previous age.

The Industrial Age began at the point when man moved ahead from animal power and invented mechanical power. Now man converted water into steam power and developed the steam engine. There was

a further leap forward when oil was discovered as fuel and used for propulsion. Similarly, modern methods of communication were developed which converted the whole world into a global village.

In the Industrial Age, by using mechanical power, man engaged in new enterprises such as mechanised transportation, the rapid communication of news, and the building of cities along modern lines. In this way, there came into existence a whole new world, both beautiful and meaningful, with a fresh viewpoint on co-operation and education, which was called the industrial civilization.

The fourth phase of civilization is what Alvin Toffler has called the Super-industrial Age. In his view, the most exceptional aspect of this age will be complete automation, i.e. the use of electronics and control systems will be on such a large scale that most jobs will be performed with the absolute minimum of human intervention. In a normal situation a man would, ideally, be able single-handedly to fulfil all of his own personal requirements.

The advent of automation is an advance intimation of the joys of Paradise. Indeed, of Paradise, the Quran says:

“There you shall find all that your souls desire and all that you can ask for: a rich provision from a benevolent and merciful God.”

THE QURAN, 41: 31

From the scientific and academic standpoint, the above-mentioned facts make the ideal age of the future — the ‘spiritual civilization’— understandable in terms of being a super-industrial age.

This fourth phase of civilization is yet to reach realisation, but it is in this phase that the ideal world — in religious terms, Paradise — will most probably take shape. The present transitional period is a condition which may be called ‘Paradise-in-the-making’.

Paradise is the final period of the journey of civilization. Such a world by the law of nature will definitely come into existence in due course. Therein, all types of limitations and disadvantages will be brought to an end; there will be no fear or grief, nor will there be any hurt or pain. All those potentialities which have been apparent to man from the very first day will be fulfilled in the world of Paradise.

Moreover, the human personality will also attain new heights of development. This for man will be the culmination: he will become the perfect man. He will find an eternal life in which old age, accidents, disease and death are absent. This will be the ideal world where man will be in a position to utilize the full potential of his personality, thus experiencing complete fulfillment.

Paradise will be the pinnacle of the evolutionary process of human civilization. Paradise will be the dawning of the perfect and ideal world of which man has always dreamt. On reaching Paradise, man will be eternally free from all sorrows and hardship. Paradise will be the ideal realm of joy, peace and eternal happiness.

It should be borne in mind though that Paradise is not a place of stagnation. In Paradise, man will make new discoveries all the time and this series of discoveries will be unending. For this reason there will be no boredom in Paradise, because boredom prevails only where new discoveries do not take place. To man, a fresh experience is the greatest source of happiness, and in Paradise, the doors of unlimited truth will continue to open every single day. The pure bliss of Paradise will therefore, not be fleeting in nature but truly eternal.

**The pure bliss of Paradise will not be
fleeting in nature but truly eternal.**

The making of Paradise is just as possible as the making of the earth and the development of different civilizations on earth. In the ancient Stone Age, there lay hidden a developed Agricultural Age, which emerged in due course. Similarly, in the Agricultural Age, the far more developed Industrial Age was hidden, and it also emerged at the proper time. We can, by the same token, say that there lies hidden in this Industrial period a far more developed, refined and spiritual world, which will appear in time for all to see. The emergence of this spiritual, or heavenly period is in practical terms as much a possibility as that of previous periods of history.

In the industrial period, the earth has been beautified. Its cities have been meticulously planned. Developments in science and technology have made the earth, a far better place to live in. Similarly, with the dawn of the final period — the Spiritual Age — the earth will be further improved and it will then become an ideal world. There are a number

of verses in the Quran giving clear indications of this. For instance,

“Praise be to God, who has fulfilled His promise to us and bestowed upon us the earth to inherit, so that we may dwell in Paradise wherever we please.” THE QURAN, 39: 74

Paradise is described as being ‘as vast as the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who believe in God and his Messengers’. THE QURAN, 57: 21

“The earth will shine with the light of its Lord.” THE QURAN, 39: 69

Today our world is potentially a paradise. Tomorrow this potential will become a reality and then the earth will become a place of eternal happiness and joy.

**By Divine arrangement, in Paradise,
justice will prevail in its most perfect form.**

Although on earth there exists nature’s life support system in its perfect form, events have shown that the present state of the earth is not an ideal one. On the earth, nature’s system may be at its best, but the simultaneous presence of good and evil make it far from ideal. Here, individuals who do good and those who do bad exist alongside each other. The presence of people who misuse their freedom is the source of all kinds of evil. But when the final phase of civilization approaches, all the bad individuals will be separated from the good. They will be deprived of all the resources of the earth, and the earth will be entrusted solely to the good. This is the truth which has been mentioned in the following verse:

“And indeed, We have written in Az-Zabur, (Psalms)
that My righteous slaves shall inherit the land.”
(i.e. the land of Paradise) THE QURAN, 21: 105

This statement made in the Quran is recorded in detail in the Book of Psalms in the Bible:

“The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell in it forever.”
PSALMS, 37: 29

After the appearance of human beings, the process of civilization set in on the earth. In the first phase man was only able to build a primitive

world. But later, he became more and more successful at constructing a highly developed world. This human success goes hand-in-hand with a continuous evolutionary process. And it is but natural to believe that one more stage is in the offing — that of a perfect world.

**The emergence of this spiritual, or heavenly period
is in practical terms as much a possibility
as that of previous periods of history.**

Now according to this evolutionary process, the earth is heading towards a superior stage. This will be the last evolutionary stage of the earth which we can call the perfect world. In this ideal world, all types of limitations will come to an end. By Divine arrangement, justice will prevail in its most perfect form. The wicked will be removed from the earth and only the virtuous will gain entry into this ideal world, where there will be no pollution of any sort. Calamities will cease to occur and all disadvantages such as disease, accidents, old age and death will be eradicated forever.

In the present world, all tasks are performed by hard work. Indeed, hardship and success are inseparable. Such a state of affairs will no longer prevail in paradise, for such refined changes will take place that each activity will be an enjoyable one. As it is said in the Quran:

“Truly, the dwellers of Paradise that day (the Day of Resurrection) will be busy in joyful activities.” THE QURAN, 36: 55

In Paradise, there will be no need for special arrangements for human diversion, for there all activities will be a source of entertainment and enjoyment.

The heaven on earth man has been seeking for thousands of years, in response to his natural urges, will be found in a state of perfection. He will find a life of joy, peace and happiness forever in this world. There will be no necessity for physical labour; pleasant intellectual activities will suffice for the achievement of all desired goals.



THE PATH TO SUCCESS

WHILE taking up the best traditions of the past, we are to build upon them for the future with solid hard work of our own. This method may require years of toil, and temporary disappointment but it is sure to be successful in the end.

When the Indian freedom fighter, Raja Mohendera Pratap (1886-1979), met Vladimir Lenin in Moscow in 1919, the first thing that the leader of the Russian Socialist Revolution said to his Indian guest was: "In which language should I speak — English, German, French or Russian?" Lenin had learnt all these languages. On this occasion, it was decided that the conversation should be conducted in English.

How had Lenin become so well-acquainted with so many languages? The answer is: by following the example of his elders and then building upon it with solid hard work. Lenin's father died when Vladimir was only sixteen, and he was reared for the most part by his mother, Maria Alexandrova. Her household, writes Lenin's biographer David Shub, 'was run along spartan lines and the children were largely self-educated. Maria Alexandrova taught herself German, French, English and the piano.'

The manner in which Lenin followed in the footsteps of his mother is illustrated by his learning of the English language. While banished to Siberia by the Czarist regime (1897-1900), Lenin and his wife, Krupskaya, spent their mornings translating 'The Theory and Practice of Trade Unionism' by Sidney and Beatrice Webb. Not only did they translate the book from English into their native Russian, but Lenin also used to translate it back into English, without referring to the original text. In a letter to his sister Anna, he wrote: "I have concluded from my experience that this is the most rational method of learning a language."

When Lenin and Krupskaya went to England in April 1902 they found that, though they had translated Sidney and Beatrice Webbs, "their knowledge of English bore only a remote resemblance to the native product. With his usual zest, Lenin set to work learning the language. He went wherever he could hear English spoken, to pubs, to Hyde Park, to all sorts of meetings. Crowding up front, he

listened carefully to every word and watched the lip movements of the speakers. In addition, he hired two English teachers and he taught them Russian in exchange for English lessons. With these efforts his English soon became fairly proficient, if not fluent.” (*Lenin: A Biography*, by David Shub, Pelican Books, p.70)

The method that Lenin adopted in learning English shows us the way to success in life. While remembering the best traditions of the past, we must add to those lessons with insight and hardwork of our own. This method may require years of toil, and temporary dissapointment, but it is sure to be successful in the end.



Turning over a New Leaf

*Corruption is a psychological evil,
while lack of skill
is a technical shortcoming.
A psychological evil
cannot be removed
by technical improvement.*

*If we are genuinely interested
in making a better society,
we shall have to work
for the psychological, or moral
reform of the individuals
who comprise the nation.*

*Merely bringing about an increase
in the number of technical courses available
will not make them
turn over a new leaf.*

A REFUSAL TO SUFFER

WHENEVER we analyse suffering, we find that there are two main features to it. One is the thing which causes the suffering and the other is our own reaction to it. We should take courage from Thelma Thompson's example, and so control our reaction that suffering is finally eliminated.

The Mojave desert in California is a place of dust, fierce winds and unbearable heat. The Mexican Indians who inhabit this area lead a life apart and speak no English. Into this situation came Thelma Thompson, a young American soldier's wife. She had decided to start living in a village at the edge of the desert to be near her husband who was stationed, during World War II, at an army training camp in the vicinity. Within a very short time she began to feel that the environment was too hostile, particularly because of the climate and the impossibility of making contact with the local people, thanks to the language barrier. And it did not help to have her husband away most of the time on military manoeuvres. Finally, she wrote to tell her parents that she would be coming back home. The reply she received from her father consisted of just two lines:

"Two men looked out from prison bars, one saw mud, and the other saw stars."

She read the couplet over and over, then, feeling ashamed of her decision to leave, she made up her mind to see 'the stars' in her situation, rather than the 'mud.' It was a decision which was to alter her entire life.

**One is the thing which causes the suffering and
the other is our own reaction to it.**

Making friends with the natives, she learned their languages and culture, and began to see desert life in a new light. She watched the magnificent desert sunsets, and studied the Cacti, the Yuccas, the scrub bushes and the Joshua and other trees growing and reflecting nature's fascinating diversity. She even hunted for sea-shells that had been left there millions of years ago when the sands of the desert had been an ocean floor.

Gradually the region began to exercise such a fascination over her mind that both she and her husband decided to stay on after he had retired from military service. She later wrote a novel, 'Bright Ramparts' which expressed all the excitement she had felt over her new experiences and discoveries. Her book proved very popular and ran to several editions.

A wretched experience had been transformed into an exciting adventure. But how exactly had this transformation taken place? Neither the desert, nor the natives, nor any other element in the situation had changed. Whatever change had taken place was inside the mind and heart of Thelma Thompson. Her own change of attitude had given her a new life.

Whenever we analyse suffering, we find that there are two main features to it. One is the thing which causes the suffering and the other is our own reaction to it. We can take courage from Thelma Thompson's example, and so control our reaction that suffering is finally eliminated. The best lessons are often learned in the most trying situations.



The Right Comparison

Thinking of oneself in relation to other men might lead to arrogance, for it is possible that one will be better off than them; one might hold a higher status in life. But when one thinks of oneself in relation to the vast universe arrogance disappears, for it becomes apparent how small and insignificant one is.

God has created the universe so that we may observe and ponder over it; so that realization of its greatness may lead us to a realization of what a small part we ourselves occupy in it; so that we may be imbued with the quality of humility, which is the greatest and most realistic quality that man can have.

THE WORD OF GOD

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

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

Believers, give charitably from the good things which you have earned and what We produce for you from the earth; not worthless things which you yourselves would only reluctantly accept. Know that God is self-sufficient and praiseworthy. 2:267

Satan threatens you with the prospect of poverty and commands you to do foul deeds. But God promises His forgiveness and His bounty. God is bountiful and all-knowing. 2:268

There are two ways of spending one's earnings in this world. One is to spend in ways shown by Satan; another is to spend in ways shown by God. What Satan does is to impress on the minds of human beings the importance of personal requirements, and bring about conviction that all their earnings are best spent on personal comforts and luxuries. When Satan sees that any individual has more wealth than is necessary for his personal needs, he kindles in him another desire, that of indulging in showy, unnecessary activities. At the instigation of Satan, man spends all his money on ostentatious living and feels happy that he has spent his money in the best possible way.

What is desired of man is that he should not regard his wealth as his personal possession. It is something that belongs only to God. A man should spend as much of his wealth as is necessary for his actual needs; the rest should be spent on achieving higher goals. Giving this surplus wealth to the weaker of God's servants and supporting God's religion increases his confidence that in the Hereafter, when he appears empty-handed before God, he will not be deprived of God's blessings. Similarly, when he spends his wealth for the cause of God's religion, he allies himself with God's mission.

He grants wisdom to whom He will; and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been granted abundant wealth. Yet none bear this in mind except those endowed with understanding. 2:269

Whatever you spend and whatever vows you make are known to God, but the wrongdoers shall have no helpers. 2:270

If you give charity openly, it is good, but if you keep it secret and give to the needy in private, that is better for you, and it will atone for some of your bad deeds. God is aware of all that you do. 2:271

It is not your responsibility to make them follow the right path; God guides whomever He pleases. Whatever wealth you spend is to your own benefit, provided that you spend only to seek the favour of God. Whatever wealth you spend [for God's cause] shall be repaid to you in full and you shall not be wronged. 2:272

One who spends his money for the sake of God in the way that He has commanded him to do, proves that he has been blessed with wisdom. Wisdom here means knowledge and understanding of the Quran. The biggest folly is to be so enamoured of one's wealth that one fails to spend for the cause of God, and the greatest wisdom lies in recognizing that monetary interests do not present any obstacle to one's engaging oneself in God's work. One should consider God's cause as one's own. One who lives within the cocoon of personal interests and considerations cannot possess the insight which would enable him to see higher realities and experience higher states of consciousness. On the contrary, one who goes ahead towards God by ignoring all personal considerations raises himself above all limitations. His consciousness reaches the divine level of God, Who is independent (free from all wants), praiseworthy, all-sufficient and wise.

Man is thus enabled to see things as they are. For he goes beyond the limitations which serve as obstacles to seeing things in their true form. However true any argument may be, its truth dawns upon one only when one can see it with an open mind.

The needy, who are too engrossed in God's cause to be able to travel about the land in search of a livelihood, are considered by those who are unaware of their condition to be free from want, because they refrain from begging. But they can be known from their appearance. They do not make insistent demands upon people. Whatever wealth you spend, God knows it. 2:273

Those who spend their wealth night and day, both privately and publicly, will receive their reward from their Lord. They shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. 2:274

The greatest way to spend money for the cause of God is to extend monetary help to those of God's servants who have devoted themselves so wholly to this cause that they have left themselves no time to earn for their personal needs. Just as a successful businessman has little free time for anything except his business, one who serves the cause of religion full time has no time to work to make money for himself. Furthermore, each job shapes, in a particular way, the thought process of the person involved. One who involves himself in business develops the relevant skills, so that he is able to easily understand the complexities of commerce. But that same person may not be able to understand the nuances of religion's cause. Similarly, a religious worker will not be able to successfully run a business, for he cannot concentrate on business matters due to his attention being diverted elsewhere. However, a society needs both kinds of activities.

The solution to this problem is simple: those who possess monetary resources should arrange a share for those who, due to their religious commitments, are unable to provide for their own economic needs. This is like a tacit division of labour which takes place between the two groups, purely in order to earn God's pleasure. The missionary, having devoted himself to God, does not ask anything from others, nor does he expect anything from them. On the other hand, those who are monetarily strong, knowing that they have amassed wealth through not devoting themselves to the cause of religion (which they should have done), think that they should, by way of compensation, give a share of their wealth to their brothers in faith.

Spending money for the cause of a peaceful religious struggle which brings no fame or rewards from the world at large makes one all the more deserving of God's blessings. For, such spending is only to seek God's pleasure.



*It is not ease, but effort; not facility, but difficulty,
that makes a man.*

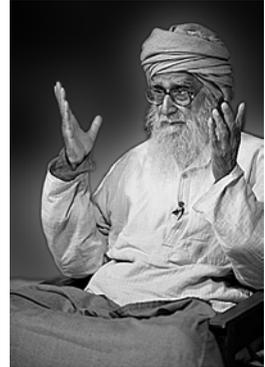
ASK MAULANA

In today's age is there a need to redefine or re-apply religion?

Yes. But redefinition does not mean revision. Redefinition means describing the old teachings in the modern idiom. That is, re-applying religious values to the new lifestyle.

What is the starting point of leading a spiritual life?

Adopt a simple lifestyle. The simple life always leads to spiritual development and ensures that you save yourself from all kinds of distraction. Distraction deprives you of the joys of being a spiritual personality, while a simple lifestyle helps you become a spiritual personality.



Do you think that it is a human need to believe in the existence of a God?

Yes, seeking the faith is a human trait and the seeking spirit is a part of the fibre of human nature. It is everyone's urge to find out the higher truth, and higher truth is nothing but the Creator of our world. Without finding the higher truth no one can be satisfied; in this sense God is the need of every man and woman, there is no doubt about it.

What is the importance of conviction? And what is the source of a strong conviction?

Conviction is very important; it is conviction that gives you courage and determination. Without conviction you cannot do anything in this world of competition. And the only source of conviction, is trust in God.

Is it necessary to entertain feelings of guilt? Doesn't it undermine confidence?

This thinking is based on a false assumption. Guilt means admitting your mistakes, so guilt gives you renewed confidence that henceforth you will do your work in a better way. Feeling guilty means being more cautious and more sincere; so, guilt is an entirely positive quality. There is nothing negative about it.

Why is a luxurious lifestyle condemned by religion?

It is not a matter of condemnation. It is a matter of wise living. A luxurious lifestyle makes you an easy-going person. It leaves you unable to understand the often harsh realities of life.

How can one find peace of mind?

People generally confuse individual peace and social peace. Social peace is an ideal that cannot be achieved, and individual peace is completely achievable. Society is out of your control, but your mind is not. When you develop the quality of tolerance you will be able to live in peace, even when there is no peace in the outer world. Peace of mind depends far more on one's attitude than the state of social affairs.

It is said that we should keep remembering death. Would this not become an obstacle to growth and development?

No. Remembering death means we must remind ourselves that time is very short and we cannot afford to lose any. Death is unavoidable, so plan your life wisely on the basis of urgency. In fact, remembering death makes you more prompt, efficient, and cautious about your time and energy. That way, you always know that it is 'now or never'.

What is the importance of silence?

Silence is the quality of a wise person. Silence means more concentrated thinking. This means avoiding an immediate reaction and giving a well-considered response in any situation. Silence simply means speaking after thinking.

What is the difference between Spirit and Mind?

In my experience, there is no difference between the two. Spirit is not an independent entity. Spirit is only a manifestation of the mind. Mind is the basis of every personality. All other things like emotions, thinking, love are different functions of the mind. You are what your mind is.



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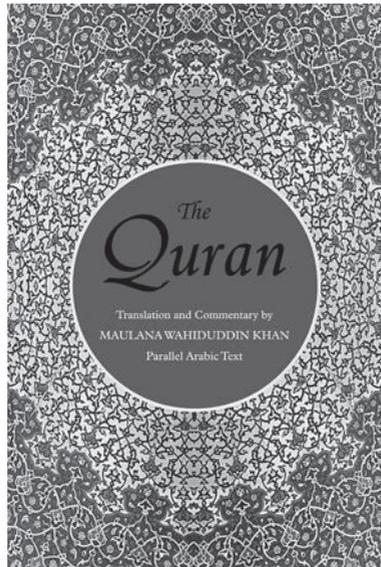
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The Quran

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY
MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN
PARALLEL ARABIC TEXT

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