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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

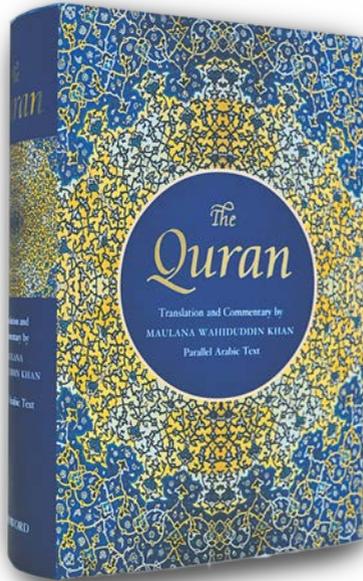


**If you fail to act,
you cannot compensate for it
by speaking more.**

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



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 Spiritual Living

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

ISSUE 17, MAY 2014

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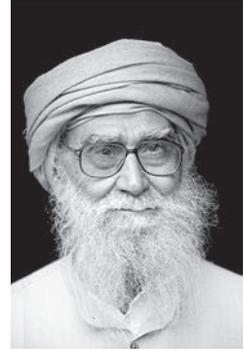
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK

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 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 Muslims'. His books have been translated into sixteen languages and are part of university curricula in six countries. He is the founder of the Centre for Peace and Spirituality based in New Delhi.



READY TO RESPOND EVERY MOMENT

GOD Almighty created man and declared that He would help man in every aspect and would be with him, in every situation. There are many verses in the Quran which describe this fact. One such verse of the Quran is as follows:

All those who are in the heavens and the earth ask of Him;
every day He manifests Himself in a new state.
Which then of the bounties
of your Lord will you deny?

THE QURAN 55: 29-30

This verse addresses man. Man is the concern of God and God Almighty is ready to respond to man at all times. The following *Hadith* further illustrates the meaning of the above mentioned verse of the Quran, Prophet of Islam said:

“Every moment God is ready to forgive one who seeks forgiveness from Him, is ready to help one who seeks help from Him and is ready to respond to one who calls upon Him.”

Al Qurtubi

How can we enable ourselves to find this ever-available help of God?

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

Use every event in your life as a point of reference! Our world is full of points of reference, provided you have an awakened mind. Every observation and learning can serve as a point of reference to establish contact with God instantly and seek His blessings. By following this method, you will be able to receive divine blessings every moment.

For example, when you undergo a hurtful experience in life, you can make it a point of reference and pray to God to save you from the hurtful experience of eternal life. Similarly, when you receive comfort in life, you can make it a point of reference and pray to God for comfort in eternal life.

We are living in a world where every moment we are faced with distraction and fail to remember God. How should we overcome this weakness? How should we continue to live in the remembrance of God? This continuity can be maintained only by engaging in intellectual effort on a constant basis.

Our mind is like a mobile phone. A mobile phone becomes inactive when its battery gets exhausted and so we need to recharge it. The same is also true for our mind. Our mind also needs to be recharged, again and again. This is the only way to continue to inculcate divine awareness, every day and night.

For example, when you are reading this article, you are using your mind, your eyes as well as the external light — sunlight or electric light. All these things were not created by you but are supplied by God Almighty alone. Remember this divine bounty and present your gratefulness to God. This is acknowledgement; and acknowledgement is what makes you a deserving candidate to receive further bounties. This is mentioned in the Quran in these words,

Remember the time when your Lord declared, "If you are
grateful, I will surely bestow more favours on you;
but if you are ungrateful, then know that
My punishment is severe indeed."

THE QURAN 14: 7

This is God's promise to man and God never betrays His promise. □

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan
editor@thespiritofislam.org

THE SECRET OF UNITY

Agree to Disagree

THE importance of unity in life can never be over-emphasized. Great works are always the result of united efforts. Unity is the greatest strength of any group and conversely, disunity its greatest weakness.

In Islam, there is such great importance given to unity that it has been made obligatory to perform the *salah* five times daily in a united congregation. *Salah* in such a manner is an extraordinary example of unity. The question now arises: when Muslims perform the daily united congregational *salah* in the mosques on such a grand scale, why is this very unity completely absent from their practical lives? The reason for this is that real unity can only be established when differences are tolerated. Remaining united despite differences is the formula for true unity.

Ritualistic unity can be maintained as a form of routine, but true unity requires a conscious awareness.

Muslims perform the congregational *salah* in the mosques, because in doing so there are no differences that arise. The momentary or temporary unity in the mosques is a unity without any differences, whereas, life outside of the mosque is full of differences. Here, it becomes necessary to lead our lives in a united manner despite our differences, and to ignore or tolerate the differences whilst maintaining mutual unity. Present day Muslims lack this second attribute and that is why they have no real unity in their social lives.

To be temporarily united whilst carrying out ritual acts is very easy, but to remain united and live harmoniously whilst ignoring or tolerating differences is extremely difficult. Ritualistic unity can be maintained as a form of routine, but true unity requires a conscious awareness. Muslims of the present day do not possess this conscious awareness, and this leads to there being no real unity in their lives. □



ISLAM AND PEACE

An address by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

I AM thankful to the organizers of this conference for giving me the opportunity to share my views with this learned audience. The topic for the present discussion is Peace. It is a very good topic, there is no doubt about it. Regarding myself, I would say that I am a born pacifist. I would say that I was born with peace, I live in peace and I want to die in peace. Also, I want to be buried in the graveyard of peace. Peace is very important in every religion. There is no exception to this.

**Peace is not simply the absence of war.
Peace means the presence of all kinds of good.**

For example, let us take the Buddhist discipline. The essence of Buddhism is tolerance, and tolerance is only the other name for peace. When I see a Buddhist monk, it is a very strange sight for me. A Buddhist monk is an embodiment of peace. I think that Buddhism is peace and peace is Buddhism. Then, let us take Hinduism and Jainism. According to my study, both Hinduism and Jainism share a common belief, that is non-violence or *ahimsa*. It is obvious that non-violence is only the other name for peace. Then, let us consider Christianity and Judaism. If you read the Bible, both the Old Testament and the New Testament, you will find that peace is very important in the teachings of both the religions. For example, Jesus Christ has said: "Love your enemy." What does it mean? You cannot love your enemy without living in peace. If you are living in peace; if your case is that of a peaceful mind, only then will you be able to love your enemy, not otherwise. So, in every religion, peace has great importance.

If you consult the dictionary for the meaning of peace, it will tell you that peace is absence of war. This is not a true definition. It is an incomplete definition. Because, absence of war has many other meanings — for example, absence of war means the absence of all kinds of evil: absence of anger, intolerance, hate, etc. Without the absence of all these things, you cannot have peace. So, peace is not simply the absence of war. Peace means the presence of all kinds of good. Where there is peace, there is love, tolerance, compassion. Moreover, where there is peace there are opportunities. Without opportunity, you cannot do anything. Without opportunity, we cannot organize a conference, we cannot establish

an industry, we cannot have a job, we cannot establish educational institutions. Opportunity is basic to all kinds of constructive activities. And, opportunity is an integral part of peace. Without peace, there is no opportunity. Due to this importance, peace has a very great place in Islam.

First of all, I would say that there are many names of God Almighty. One of the names of God is *As-Salam*, that is, Peace. Thus, God Himself is peace. There is a prayer of the Prophet of Islam: "O God, You are peace, peace comes from You, peace returns to You. Bless us so that we can live in peace and grant us entry into paradise, the abode of peace." (Bukhari). Thus, peace is very important in Islam. There is a verse in the Quran:

And God calls to the home of peace

THE QURAN 10: 25

It means that God wants to establish a peaceful society. It is God's plan. God has directed people that they must establish a peaceful society, because a peaceful society is a must for any kind of constructive activity.

**Opportunity is basic to any kind of constructive activity.
Without peace, there is no opportunity.**

Peace is the culture of the whole universe. In the universe, there are numerous bodies: stars, planets, and galaxies. All these celestial bodies are in a moving state: stars are moving, the planets are moving, and the sun and the moon are moving.

Movement often leads to accidents. Our roads are a very good illustration of this phenomenon. There is movement on our roads: cars, trucks and various other things are in motion. And, an accident takes place every second on these roads. But, if you observe the universe, there are no accidents. There is movement, but there are no accidents. Why is this so? Because, God Almighty controls the universe. The universe is a divine demonstration telling us, 'O men and women, you have to live in peace!' This is the culture of the universe: a divine culture, or a universal culture.

According to western thought, freedom is the *summum bonum*, the highest good. But, I don't subscribe to this concept. In fact, peace is the

summum bonum. Freedom has some negative points, but peace has no negative points. This reality has been stated in the Quran in these words: "Peace is the greater good" (THE QURAN 4: 128), or peace is the best or peace is the *summum bonum*. I know that there are some Muslims who are engaged in violence. However, they are not following Islam. You have to differentiate between Islam and Muslims. You have to judge Muslims in the light of Islamic teachings, not vice versa. Thus, Muslims are not representatives of Islam. If you want to know what Islam is, you have to see its text; that is, the Quran and *Sunnah*, and not the Muslim practice.

Peace is the culture of the whole universe.

If you read the *Seerah* or the life of the Prophet of Islam, you will find that the whole life of the Prophet was based on peace. The Prophet never engaged in violence. I will give some examples. There were many excuses or reasons for the Prophet to take to violence; however, he refrained from doing so. The Prophet of Islam was born in 570 AD. He started his mission in 610 AD in Makkah. As we know, the Kabah is the holiest place in Islam. At the time the Prophet started his mission, there were 360 idols in the Kabah. The Kabah was built by Prophet Abraham, but after some centuries, the Arabs became idol-worshippers and placed many idols in the premises of the Kabah.

The Prophet of Islam was the Prophet of *tawheed*, he was a monotheist. That is, his main message was that God is one. The Prophet, however, never reacted against these idols and remained in Makkah with this situation for thirteen years. He simply tried to make people aware of the reality of *tawheed*, that is, monotheism. Peaceful persuasion or peaceful *dawah* work was the culture of the Prophet at that time. The Prophet knew that his reaction would lead to violence, violence to war, and hence there would be no peace. Thus, all opportunities to perform *dawah* work would get jeopardized. So, the Prophet tolerated the presence of idols in the Kabah.

Then, the Makkan people turned hostile to the Prophet and decided to kill him. However he never went to war with them. The Prophet instead migrated from Makkah to Madinah. This was also an act of peace. At that time there were two options before the Prophet: either engage in war or migrate from Makkah. The Prophet opted for migration; he left Makkah and settled in Madinah.

There were three Jewish tribes residing in Madinah at that time. Almost, half of the population of Madinah consisted of Jews. When the Prophet settled in Madinah, he adopted the Jewish *qibla* as his own in Madinah. The Prophet's *qibla*, or prayer direction, was the Kabah, but he started praying in the direction of the Jewish *qibla*. This was done only to avoid confrontation. This was the policy of peace adopted by the Prophet.

When the Prophet settled in Madinah, he issued a declaration that has come down in history as *Sahifat al-Madinah*, which means the Madinah Declaration. In this, the Prophet included a provision in these words: "For Jews their religion, for Muslims their religion" (Ibn Hisham). It means that the Prophet placed both the Jewish and Muslim communities on an equal level. There was no difference between Muslims and Jews. The Prophet gave equal status to both the communities.

According to Islam, the categorization of people into enemies and friends is wrong. Everyone is either a friend or a potential friend.

I would like to share an interesting incident here. When the Prophet was in Madinah. One day it happened that he saw a funeral procession passing by. The Prophet was seated at that time, and on seeing the funeral procession, he stood up in respect. One of his Companions said: "O Prophet, it was the funeral of a Jew, not a Muslim." That is, you are offering respect to a Jewish body. The Prophet of Islam remarked: "Was he not a human being?" (Al-Bukhari). Here, we can see that the Prophet was able to discover a commonality between Muslims and Jews: they have equal status; there is no difference at all. This is the true spirit of Islam. Those Muslims who say this or that community are enemies of Islam profess un-Islamic thinking. According to Islam, no one is our enemy, not even Jews. No community or nation is the enemy of Islam.

Once when I was in the US, I was invited to give a lecture in a church. After my lecture, a Christian scholar asked me a question. "In Christianity, we have a very good teaching. Jesus Christ has said: 'Love your enemy.' This is a very nice teaching. Can you cite any example of this kind from Islam?" I replied: "Yes, you can refer to Chapter 41 of the Quran. There are 114 chapters in the Quran, both big and small. The verse in Chapter 41 reads: 'Good and evil deeds are not equal. Do good deed in return for bad deed; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend' (THE QURAN 41: 34). This

means that according to Islam, the categorization of people into enemies and friends is wrong. According to Islam, everyone is either a friend or a potential friend. An enemy is a potential friend. The duty of a Muslim is to turn this potential into actuality through good deeds. This is the true spirit of Islam

We shouldn't limit ourselves to what is appearing in the media or what Muslims are engaging in. One must refer to the Quran, the *Seerah* and the *Hadith*. Fortunately, we have the authentic version of Islam, that is, the Quran and *Sunnah*. If you want to know what Islam is, then do not form an opinion through the media or Muslim practices. One must directly read the Quran. The translations of the Quran are available in different languages. By reading the Quran, one can discover Islam. If one starts reading the Quran, one will learn that in the very first verse of the very first Chapter, God is introduced as "the Lord of the Worlds" (THE QURAN 1: 2), and not as Lord of the Muslims.

All the verses of the Quran are based on peace, love and compassion. In Islam, hate is taboo and unlawful. No one is allowed to hate another person, because every human being has been created by God Almighty. No man or woman was created by Satan. So, there is no difference between 'this' and 'that'. You have to adopt a friendly behaviour towards every human being. There is a saying of the Prophet of Islam: "A Muslim is one by whose hands and tongue, people are safe." (Al-Bukhari). That is, a Muslim is a peaceful member of society. Anyone who claims to be a Muslim but is not peaceful is not a Muslim. This is the criterion for being a Muslim.

**If you want to know what Islam is, then do not form an opinion through the media or Muslim practices.
One must directly read the Quran.**

Once, a Companion of the Prophet came to seek his advice. At that time the Prophet was facing various problems and atrocities. In that situation, this Companion said: "O Prophet of God, give me some master advice by which I may be able to manage all the affairs of my life." (Al-Bukhari). He wanted a formula by which he could lead his life peacefully in family, society or with those people who subscribe to some other religion. The Prophet said: "Don't be angry." What is anger? People are angry when they are provoked. Without provocation, there is no anger. Anger is always the result of provocation. Thus, when the Prophet said,

'Don't be angry', he meant, 'Don't be angry, even when provoked'. This is the true spirit of Islam. Negative reaction or negative thinking is un-Islamic. The word Islam itself has a connotation of peace. Because, the root word of Islam is *silm*, which means peace. So, Islam is a religion of peace.

'Don't be angry, even when provoked'. This is the true spirit of Islam. Negative reaction or negative thinking is un-Islamic.

There are many stories of the Prophet having engaged in war. The fact, however, is that the Prophet never engaged in war, except sometimes when he was compelled, he engaged in skirmishes. They were small skirmishes, and not wars. All the so called battles or wars were actually skirmishes, because they lasted for only one day. According to scholars' definition, it requires six days to call an act a war. The minimum period of war is six days. In the life of the Prophet there was no full-fledged war, only skirmishes.

What is the reason behind this? The reason is that Islam has a great mission. The mission is to make people aware of the Creation Plan of God. That is, to tell people why God created man, what is the right path and the wrong path; what is pre-death period and post-death; what is the successful way of life; how can one find entry into Paradise; what is salvation, etc. All these questions are very important. The only mission of the Prophet is to make people aware of these issues. There is no need for fighting in order to do this. Islam wants peace so that it may complete its mission. Such a mission can be carried out only in peace and normalcy. If there is hate, violence and war, one cannot perform this mission.

So, the only concern of Islam and the Prophet of Islam was to make people aware of the Creation Plan of God. This is not conversion; rather it is only *dawah*, or conveying the message to all mankind. Conversion is not Islam's goal. Only conveying of the message of Islam is the goal, that is, telling others what is the purpose of life, what is Paradise and how to enter Paradise. This is a peaceful mission, and can be carried out only in a normal situation.

All Muslims who are engaged in war; it is their own concern, not Islamic concern. Muslims are not doing *jihad*, they are actually engaged in

their *qaumi* fighting. This is true even of Muslims in Palestine and Kashmir. All those countries where they are engaged in *jihad* is not true *jihad*. Because, *jihad* means to 'strive or struggle'. *Jihad* doesn't mean *qital*, which is fighting. *Jihad* simply means to struggle. There is no connotation of war in this.

**If you want divine blessings, then you have to live in peace and establish a peaceful society.
This is the essence of Islam.**

There is a verse in the Quran: "Do great *jihad* with them by means of this [the Quran]." (THE QURAN 25: 52). Now, the Quran is not a sword or a bomb or a gun. How can one wage war with the Quran? The Quran is a book of ideology. So, this verse means that Islam believes in ideological *jihad*, and not violent *jihad*. Violent *jihad* is out of the scheme of Islam. The only *jihad* is ideological *jihad* through the Quran, that is, conveying the message of the Quran to all mankind. The gist of that message is:

And God calls to the home of peace
THE QURAN 10: 25.

That is, 'O people, you have to live in peace. So that you can receive God's blessings.' This verse tells us that if you want divine blessings, then you have to live in peace and establish a peaceful society. This is the essence of Islam. What I am saying, I am saying with conviction, after a long study of the Quranic and Islamic texts.

In short, Islam is a religion of peace, compassion and it advocates living with friendly behaviour in society. This is the formula to establish a better society in this world. Also, this is the formula by following which one can find entry into Paradise.

Thank you! ☐

This address was given at a conference on "Peace-Building through Learning and Understanding" organized by World Buddhist Culture Trust and Osmania University Centre for International Programmes, at Osmania University, Hyderabad on November 29, 2013.



THE VEIL OF CAUSATION

Cause of All Causes

A STRONG conviction in the existence of God is most desirable but experience shows otherwise. Most people are unable to have a strong faith in God and some of them go to such extremes as to deny God altogether. This fact can be observed throughout the history of mankind. Why is this so?

This is because in accordance with the creation plan of God, all events and incidents are a consequence of cause and effect. For every event that happens in this world there appears to be a cause, because of which, most people attribute the event to its cause. Due to the presence of this apparent cause, they are unable to see the hand of God behind the event.

In accordance with the creation plan of God, all events and incidents are a consequence of cause and effect.

This phenomenon has been observable throughout human history. But in the present age with the discoveries of science, it has taken the form of an ideology that could be called the 'law of causation'. When scientific developments using microscopic and macroscopic observations in the universe uncovered the natural causes for all events, it came to be understood that everything was the result of its cause. Because of these scientific discoveries it came to be said:

If events are due to natural causes they are
not due to supernatural causes.

However, this is the very test of man in this world. Man needs to develop his consciousness so that he can see the hand of God behind every causal event. He should discover that in these events the cause is just a veil and not the reality.

The name of this discovery is faith in God. Those people who are able to discover this reality in this world are the ones who will be deserving of a reward from God which will be their entry into everlasting Paradise. □



DESTRUCTIVE POLITICS

Political Interpretation of Islam

Once, a well-known Muslim ideologue from the West, while addressing a Muslim conference, declared:

Rebellion against a tyrant is obedience to God!

THIS phrase portrays the mindset formed by a political interpretation of Islam. The modern generation of Muslims are generally influenced by this political interpretation. Today, the agitations and protests across the world in various countries in the name of 'Islamic Revolution' are a product of this political interpretation.

This sort of so-called 'revolutionary politics' can by no means whatsoever, be considered as Islamic politics. In stronger terms, this politics is actually Satanic politics in the name of Islam. The founding-father of this politics was Satan himself. Today, the flag-bearers of this sort of politics are undoubtedly following in the footsteps of Satan, not of Islam.

To focus on one's work without confronting the authorities is the method of the angels. And confronting the authorities and agitating, fired by the 'politics of opposition', is the method of Satan.

The Quran relates that when God created Adam, there were two other creatures present — the angels and the *jinn*. God ordered the angels and the *jinn* to bow down before Adam. The angels obeyed this commandment of God, but Satan, who was the head of the *jinn*, refused to obey this order. And so he became a rebel against God.

This was the first incident of revolt against authority in human history. This political revolt or the 'politics of opposition' is undoubtedly the practice of Satan. To focus on one's work without confronting the authorities is the method of the angels. And confronting the authorities and agitating, fired by the 'politics of opposition', is the method of Satan.

Strangely, this negative politics of Satan has prevailed throughout almost the whole of human history, among both believers and others.

The direct result of this negative politics is that instead of becoming a history of progress and development, human history became a history of destruction.

Why is it that almost the whole of human history turned into a history of this sort of Satanic politics? The reason for this is that the Creator has given man an exceptional feature and that is the ego. It is actually the ego that provides man a special status in the whole of the cosmos.

This sort of so-called ‘revolutionary politics’ can by no means whatsoever, be considered as Islamic politics.

There are two aspects of the ego — the positive and negative. In collective life, be it within the family or in the wider society, it always happens that people face experiences that prick their egos. On such occasions, if a person can control himself — if he can properly handle the issue of ‘ego management’ — he would have used his ego, as it were, in a proper manner. But if his ego is provoked and he lets it affect his entire personality, he will create immense problems for himself, and for others, too. He will have failed in the art of ‘ego management’.

One has to always face this issue of managing the ego. When this problem occurs in the political sphere and one fails to manage one’s ego properly, it is what is called the ‘politics of opposition’. This is what challenging the political authorities is about. Because most people fail in the art of ‘ego management’, almost the entirety of human history presents a picture of political destruction.

The solution to this problem is explained in the Quran and *Hadith* in terms of what can be termed as the ‘politics of patience’ or *sabr*. The politics of patience is no politics of defeat. It is but another name for political status quoism — that is to say, to accept, in practical terms, the status quo as far as the issue of political power is concerned, and, without confronting the political authorities, to avail the opportunities present in the non-political sphere.

It is this formula that is expressed in a *Hadith* report, according to which the Prophet indicated that:

God grants to non-violence what
He does not grant to violence. ❏

STARTING FROM SCRATCH

Humble Beginnings

“I have reached my present position by climbing a ladder and not by coming up to it in a lift.”

THIS observation was made by a tailor who had started with nothing but his own two hands and the will to work, and who had become eminently successful in his line of business. “Making a good coat is not child’s play. The whole process is so complicated that without detailed information as to how to proceed, long experience and a high degree of skill, it is almost impossible to accomplish. It is only after a lifetime of hard work that I have succeeded in running a prosperous shop in the city.”

The tailor went on to explain how he had served his apprenticeship under the guidance of an expert tailor. Just learning the art of cutting and sewing had taken him five long years. When he opened his own little shop, he discovered that he had difficulty in giving his customers a good fitting. This was because during his apprenticeship he had never really grasped the fact that people could be of such different shapes and sizes. He therefore set himself to the task of studying human anatomy, but it was only after many years of effort that he could make a coat with an absolutely perfect fitting. He eventually became so expert in this that he could even give perfect fittings to those who unfortunately suffered from deformities — such as hunchbacks. “In any type of work, there are many things which one has to learn on one’s own. Often one cannot foresee these things at the outset, and each obstacle has to be overcome by hard work and ingenuity.”

The tailor talked of many things of this nature concerning his skills, and it seemed as though it was a lecture on nation building by some very experienced leader.

In truth, the only way to solve our economic and social problems is to follow the example of the tailor. After this initial apprenticeship, he had gone ahead and done things on his own. He had walked up the stairs and not by taking a ride in the lift. There are no buttons which you can just push and automatically reach your goals. You can only make progress step by step. Progress can seldom be made by leaps and bounds. By means of the ladder you can progress even to the stage of owning the lift, but you cannot make a success of your life by starting with the lift and expecting it to do everything for you. □

THE ROLE OF THE *ULEMA*

Guidance & Reformation

TO elaborate on the role of the *ulema* in contemporary times, one first needs to be clear about what role Islam sets for the *ulema*. This will provide us the proper criteria for examining the course of action adopted by the *ulema* in our times.

The following Quranic verse gives us appropriate guidance with regard to the role of the *ulema*:

It is not right that all the believers should go out
[in times of war] all together. Why then does not a party
from every group come to [the Prophet] to acquire a deeper
knowledge of religion and to warn their people, so that
they can guard themselves against evil.

THE QURAN 9: 122

Division of Arenas of Activity

This verse was revealed at times when the conditions of conflict and political *jihad* were prevalent. Madinah had become an established political state under the Prophet of Islam. The fear of attack or conflict from others was ever present and defensive methods had to be adopted to pre-empt them.

Islam differentiates between the arena of activity of scholars and political leaders. Their respective arenas have been kept separate and distinct.

Under these conditions, with this verse, the Muslim *ummah* has been provided with a guiding principle of lasting significance, which separates, in practical terms, the arena of campaigns from that of acquiring knowledge. Accordingly, one section of the *ummah* was given the responsibility under such conditions, of being active in the field of consolidation of the state, while another section was charged with the responsibility of looking after the department of knowledge, to which they were to devote themselves entirely.

For a section of the believers to remain behind to focus on matters of knowledge was not in any way a restriction on them. In fact, this

indicates the power of knowledge, for engaging in *jihad* through knowledge is more important than doing so through arms.

This principle does not indicate any opposition between religion and politics, but, rather, a division of the arenas of activity among the believers. This division is fully in accordance with the *shariah*.

In Islam, the religion for men and women is the same. Men and women are identical in terms of being addressees of the faith. However, their arenas of activity have been separated. Women are charged with the responsibility of nurturing future generations, while maintaining and providing for their families is the responsibility of the men. In the same manner, even among men there are differences in terms of their respective arenas of activity. One such difference, that Islam makes is between the arena of activity of scholars, on one hand, and political leaders, on the other. Their respective arenas have been kept separate and distinct. Scholars have the responsibility of being guides and teachers of the people so that the latter do not go astray.

Scholars have the responsibility of being guides and teachers of the people so that the latter do not go astray.

As far as practical politics are concerned, those who engage in this field must possess the necessary skills. Not everyone can shoulder this responsibility. It was on the basis of the recognition of this difference among people in terms of their capabilities that the Prophet indicated to the *ummah* that after him they should appoint Abu Bakr as their leader; while on the other hand, he advised Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, Abu Hurairah and Hasan ibn Thabit never to accept any political position.

Due to their in-born qualities, some people are more suitable for occupying official posts than others. According to Islam, the political field should be given over to those who possess the requisite political skills and capabilities, while others should engage in various other fields that are also necessary for the community. Accordingly, while politicians are charged with the task of administering and organizing the people, scholars have the responsibility of providing the people with the knowledge that they need.

This distinction between the activity of politicians and scholars is made clearer in the *Hadith*. The *Hadith* texts record numerous traditions that

refer to the deterioration in governance in later times, exhorting people that even if they see that their rulers have gone astray they must not challenge them. Even in such circumstances, these traditions suggest, they must not brand the rulers as 'oppressors' or revolt against them.

This clearly indicates that the believers must respect the division between the 'men of politics' and the 'men of knowledge' even in such extreme conditions. This also suggests that it is not only in ordinary circumstances that the *ulema* of the *umma* must fulfill their responsibility as teachers of the people. Rather, they must continue to play this constructive role even when they see that the rulers have fallen prey to corruption. No matter how degenerate the system of governance may appear to have become, the *ulema* must not deviate from the work that they have been entrusted with.

Leadership based on society

In the section on leadership and justice in the *Mishkat al-Masabih* it is reported that the Prophet said:

Your leadership will be a reflection of you [the people].

From this *Hadith*, we learn about two distinct things: on one hand, the mentality of people, their likes and dislikes, and so on, and, on the other hand, leadership over people. The political structure and the nature of the leadership of a particular society, this *Hadith* teaches us, is indelibly shaped by the former.

Politicians are charged with the task of administering and organizing the people, scholars have the responsibility of providing the people with the knowledge that they need.

The *ulema* are charged with the responsibility of helping to shape people's consciousness and guide them on the right path, leaving the task of governing people to politicians. A healthy society must observe this distinction of tasks and responsibilities. Violating this distinction is bound to lead to great disruption. If people are properly guided and their minds shaped in the right way by the *ulema*, they will enjoy the right sort of government. Conversely, if people's character and minds are corrupted, the government that rules over them will be of the same sort.

In life, the question of people's character is more important than that of the government that rules over them. The former is the base, while the latter is the super-structure, which rests on this base. Often, people mistakenly perceive this superstructure to be more important than the base, but in reality the base is much more vital. It is for this reason that the status of the *ulema* is loftier than that of the rulers, and the divine reward that they will receive is more, too.

This principle was established in the early period of Islam, and it shaped the actions of the *ummah* in later times as well. In Islam's early period, a group among the Companions of the Prophet engaged in physical *jihad*, while another group, including, for instance, Abdullah ibn Abbas, Abdullah ibn Masud and Abdullah ibn Umar, devoted themselves to the fields of scholarship and inviting people to Islam.

No matter how degenerate the system of governance may appear to have become, the *ulema* must not deviate from the work that they have been entrusted with.

Among the two generations that followed the Companions of the Prophet, this same division of sphere of activity was observed. Some of these early Muslims specialized in the scholarly field, including Quranic commentary, *Hadith*, *fiqh* and related disciplines. This pattern continued for around a thousand years. Those who specialized in the field of scholarship, as Quranic reciters, *Hadith* scholars, *fuqaha*, *ulema*, Islamic missionaries, Sufis, teachers and so on, focused on their own particular sphere of activity. This division of work gave rise to a glorious history of scholarship and communicating the message of God, a precious legacy of the *ummah*. Had all the Muslims in this period devoted themselves to armed *jihad*, it would certainly have created an enormous vacuum in the history of Islam.

The Emperor Aurangzeb

This tradition, of a clear distinction between the spheres of activity of the *ulema* and the political class, was first breached in India in a significant way at the time of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (1618-1707). Although Aurangzeb was born in the royal family, he was an *alim*. Aurangzeb's father, the Emperor Shah Jahan, wanted to make his elder son, Dara Shikoh, his successor. In this way, circumstances seemed to have been taking Aurangzeb in the direction of becoming an

alim rather than an Emperor. But he did not accept this. In 1658, he had his father dethroned, and then imprisoned him in the Agra Fort. Then, in 1659, he murdered his brother, Dara Shikoh, after which he ruled as the head of the Mughal Empire for about half a century.

Aurangzeb was a man with many skills. Had he played the role of an *alim* instead of an Emperor, it is possible that he would have done such a good job of it that he could have become a model for the *ulema* to emulate for several centuries.

Aurangzeb's reign was a period when the foundations of modern science were being laid in Europe. The impact of this new knowledge had reached India's shores by Aurangzeb's time. But Aurangzeb did not consider this development, and instead, remained engrossed in his political quest. His father, Shah Jahan, had built the enormous Taj Mahal, and Aurangzeb had the opportunity to build an impressive *mahal* or palace of knowledge in India had he wished.

He could have let Dara Shikoh handle the governance of the Empire while he could have focused on establishing an educational empire in India. Had he done so, he would have done much more for the sake of Islam and the *ummah* than what he unsuccessfully tried to do through politics and war.

The political structure and the nature of the leadership of a particular society is indelibly shaped by the mentality of people, their likes and dislikes.

Had Aurangzeb travelled to Europe, instead of spending years fighting wars in the Deccan, he would have realized that what he was doing was against the demands of his times. He sought to establish the supremacy of Islam through the 'politics of the sword', although the age had already dawned — and which would soon arrive in India, too — when the 'politics of knowledge' would become a powerful means of establishing supremacy.

It appears that Aurangzeb and the other *ulema* of his times were probably unaware of not only the intellectual and scientific developments that were taking place in Europe at that time but also of the progress that had been made in this regard in the centuries of Muslim rule in Spain, spanning from the early eighth century to the late fifteenth century.

When the Muslim Sultanate collapsed in Spain, many Spanish Muslim scholars and scientists left for other lands. At that time, a powerful Muslim Caliphate ruled over Turkey. Some Muslim scientists, fleeing Spain, headed to Turkey, but they received no support in the royal court there. Not long after the demise of Muslim power in Spain, the Mughals established their empire in India. But the powerful Mughal Emperors never thought of inviting at least some of the great Spanish Muslim scientists to India to carry on their intellectual work. This sort of work required governmental patronage. And so, when the scientists of the erstwhile Muslim Spain received no support from, or opportunities in the Muslim world, they shifted to Western Europe instead, where they received the patronage of non-Muslim rulers. This was one reason that the work that had begun in Muslim Spain reached its climax not in the Muslim world, but, rather, in non-Muslim Europe.

Because he was unaware of all these developments, and owing to his inordinate interest in politics, Aurangzeb took no steps in this regard. And so, the entire credit for the flowering of modern science went to Europe.

The *ulema* are charged with the responsibility of helping to shape people's consciousness and guide them on the right path, leaving the task of governing people to politicians.

The conditions that gave rise to what is called the 'modern age' as well as the earliest manifestations of this new age had already appeared by the time Aurangzeb ascended the Mughal throne. The first model of the spring-driven watch, which was to replace the old-fashioned clock, was produced in Germany in 1500. Based on Portugal's advances in geography and naval technology, Vasco Da Gama landed on the Malabar coast in southern India in 1498, inaugurating a sea route that connected Europe with Asia. In 1510, Portugal captured Goa. A century later, the British East India Company was set up, and, a short while later, the French East India Company. But because of his political involvements, Aurangzeb was unaware of these developments or else did not give them the importance they deserved, although they clearly suggested the grave external challenges that they would soon pose, not just to India but to the entire Muslim world.

Long before Aurangzeb was born, in the second century C.E., a

rudimentary form of printing had been invented in China, which was later further refined in Europe before Aurangzeb's time. Aurangzeb is hailed by some for making copies of the Quran with his own hand, but he was not aware that before him, in 1455, Gutenberg had printed the first copy of the Bible in the printing press that he had invented, thereby taking the Christian missionary enterprise from the age of handicrafts to that of the machine. Had Aurangzeb known of this development, he could have set up printing presses in India to print the Quran, rather than having to make copies of the Quran by hand.

Even though you may see injustice and corruption in your political leaders, only speaking to them words of justice and truth is considered as the best *Jihad*.

Cambridge University was established in 1571, while Paris University and Oxford University were established much before that — in the 12th century. Aurangzeb reigned in the seventeenth century. How much better it would have been had he focused on a much more important task — that of establishing a massive university in India for all the various branches of knowledge! He could have set up centres to engage in research in various contemporary disciplines. He could have established a new 'House of Knowledge' in Delhi to translate important works by European scholars. He could have arranged for an academy of *ulema*, who could have acquired modern subjects and engaged in research on them. But he did no such thing whatsoever. And the simple reason for this was because he did not agree to observe the distinction in the arena of activity that we have alluded to.

***Ulema* and political rulers**

According to a *Hadith*,

To speak words of truth before a tyrant ruler
is amongst the best of *Jihad*.

Abu Dawud

It must be noted that the *Jihad* mentioned in the above *Hadith*, is a verbal *Jihad* and not an armed *Jihad*. That is, according to its guidance, even though you may see injustice and corruption in your political leaders, only speaking to them words of justice and truth is considered as the best *Jihad*. It does not imply that in the face of injustice and corruption, a revolt or agitation can be undertaken against the leaders

in order to remove them from their positions. To initiate or participate in a campaign aimed at deposing an established political leadership is against Islam. This teaching was universally accepted and followed by all the Companions of the Prophet of Islam, the *Hadith* compilers and the *ulema* of yore.

Early Islamic history is witness to the fact that the *ulema* has always been acting as counsellors to the political rulers and have never initiated any sort of political revolt against them. The *ulema* of the modern age however, have gone against the spirit of this *Hadith* and have instigated their followers to rebel and revolt against their corrupt or nonreligious rulers.

***Ulema* and the dawn of the Modern Age**

Muslim *ulema* found themselves in a situation where on one hand, western colonial powers had put an end to Muslim political rule and on the other, revolutionary discoveries in scientific knowledge were brought about by these very same western powers. This presented a unique issue that now confronted the *ulema*. Those who had put an end to Muslim political power had a power even greater than political power, on the strength of which they had spread out over the whole world. This was the power of scientific knowledge.

To initiate or participate in a campaign aimed at deposing an established political leadership is against Islam.

Muslims had their historical glory in political power. On the other hand, the secret of their religious glory was hidden in scientific knowledge. This was a time when the potential had been realised for the Muslim *ulema* to establish the truth of their religion based on accepted human knowledge. These very western powers had brought about the culmination of the revolution in human thought that began with the Prophet of Islam and his companions.

From the Quran, we know that in ancient times there was no freedom of religious thought (THE QURAN 85: 4-8), there was no freedom of action (THE QURAN 96: 9-10), and there was no freedom of expression (THE QURAN 72: 19). The Quran also tells us that the very purpose of our existence in this world is that God wants to put us to a 'test'. An imperative condition for this 'test' is the freedom of man. In ancient times, man was deprived of such freedom because in those times, religious power or

religion belonged to those who had political power. It was the western colonial powers that brought about the new age of freedom that was in conformance with God's creation plan.

Muslims had their historical glory in political power. On the other hand, the secret of their religious glory was hidden in scientific knowledge.

There is another verse in the Quran that says that the divine revelation was sent to the Prophet so that mankind should be made aware of the creation plan of God (THE QURAN 25: 1). In ancient times due to traditional methods and the limitations of human knowledge, the global realisation of this verse was not possible.

The famous *tabeée*, Uqabah bin Nafae stood on the African shore of the Atlantic Ocean and said:

'Oh Lord, if I knew that there were people on the other side of this sea, then I would enter into this sea to cross it'.

At that time, knowledge was limited and most people were unaware that lands existed on the other side of the Atlantic. Due to these limitations, the global communication of the message of God was not possible. Now, western powers have made this possible through the advent of modern methods of communication. The print and electronic media have realised the potential that was mentioned in this verse of the Quran.

However, the Muslim *ulema* of the modern times have been unable to appreciate this contribution of the western world. Instead of developing a positive global humanitarian perspective, they have become consumed in hatred towards the western powers who had taken away their political and historic glory.

The Muslim *ulema* did not appreciate the hidden reality that the western powers had a supporting role towards the benefit of Islam and therefore could not avail of the potential opportunities that these powers had presented them. □



FATE OF THE TRUTH-TELLER

Unbelievable But True

THIS is a true story that appeared in an American magazine. A Greenland Eskimo was taken on one of the American North Polar expeditions. Later, as a reward for faithful service, he was brought to New York for a short visit. He was filled with amazement and wonder at the miracles of sight and sound that he saw there. When he returned to his native village, he told stories of buildings that rose to the very face of the sky; of tram cars, which he described as houses that moved along a track; of artificial lights, and all the other dazzling concomitants of the metropolis.

His people looked at him coldly and walked away, and forthwith throughout the village he was dubbed *Sagdluk*, meaning the Liar. In shame, he carried this name to his grave. Long before his death his original name was entirely forgotten. The simple minds of the Eskimos were unable to visualize the startling pictures drawn by *Sagdluk*, so they simply rejected the truth.

**The prophets were made to see the world Hereafter
before its coming, so that they could warn
man of its advent.**

Just as the Eskimo was made to see a hitherto unknown world, so God gave the prophets a glimpse of the world that lies beyond death. They came to their peoples and conveyed to them the truths that God had embedded in their consciousness. But since these truths belonged to an unseen world, which man was unable to visualize, people dubbed them madmen and liars (THE QURAN 11: 27). This was the fate of all the prophets of God (THE QURAN 36: 30).

Indeed, every truth-teller in the history of man has had to tread the same rocky path. In this world a veil of falsehood clouds the truth. Man has not seen the world in which truth will come into its own. The prophets were made to see that world before its coming, so that they could warn man of its advent. But they met with disbelief from people who had seen nothing beyond the world which meets the eye. □



IN THE NICK OF TIME

Be Prepared

A MEDICAL college professor, putting a student through an oral examination, asked him, "How many of these pills would you give to a man who had suffered a heart attack?" "Four," replied the student. A minute later, he piped up, "Professor, can I change my answer?" "You can, by all means," said the professor, looking at his watch. "But, regrettably, your patient has already been dead for forty seconds."

Certain matters in life are so critical that they require the appropriate step to be taken without a moment's hesitation. But an instant decision must also be a correct one, otherwise the consequences could be drastic, and could mean a lifetime of repentance.

**Certain matters in life are so critical that they
require the appropriate step to be taken
without a moment's hesitation.**

Our moments of decision-making are often very similar to our attempts to board a train. Catching a train requires preparation. We have to pack up our luggage, making sure we take the right things with us, buy a ticket, arrange transport to take us to the station and we must, of course, already be on the platform at the appointed time, otherwise we are surely going to be left behind. For the train is no respecter of persons. It arrives on time and departs on time, and pays no heed whatsoever to tardy passengers. If we are like the medical student who was caught on the wrong foot because of lack of preparation and who was much too late with the correct answer, the train of life will go on its scheduled course and we shall be left standing, wondering what to do next and how to avert the disastrous consequences of our failure to get on board.

It is, therefore, necessary to be prepared for all eventualities in life. That means assiduously acquiring a good education and losing no time in gaining useful experience relevant to our chosen occupations. It above all requires a mental and physical readiness to seize opportunities when they come our way, and to be firm of purpose, never permitting one's energy to be frittered away in pointless vacillation. □

ABASEMENT AND DESTITUTION

False Perception

Surah Al-Baqarah (2: 61), the second chapter of the Quran, refers to the case of the Jews of the earlier times and relates a law of nature in these words:

Abasement and destitution were stamped upon them,
and they incurred the wrath of God [...]

THE words 'abasement' and 'destitution' are used here in the psychological sense. They indicate a condition where, in reality a person is not debased; but yet, inside his psyche, he feels himself to be so. He appears to be well-off, but yet, in his mind he feels he is destitute. This Quranic verse refers to this psychological condition of the people and not their actual condition.

This psychological condition emerges in a community that considers itself to be superior to others on account of its beliefs and its history. It considers itself to be the best and the greatest of all communities. Along with this, it lives in its past glory. Any community that falls prey to this psychological condition will develop a mentality that is based on false pride. And it is this false pride that engenders psychological abasement and psychological destitution in any community.

It is this false pride that engenders psychological abasement and psychological destitution in any community.

This psyche of false pride appeared very prominently among two religious communities—one, Jews, and the other, Muslims. In earlier times, Jews fell prey to this psychological condition, and today Muslims are stricken by it. Today, Muslims number more than one billion. Muslims rule almost sixty countries. In terms of material resources, they have everything. Yet, despite this, every Muslim, in his capacity of being a member of the Muslim community, today lives in the psyche of abasement and destitution. The reason for this is that Muslims consider whatever they have got, to be less than what they imagine they should have, because of their false pride.

It is this false pride that is the real cause for all the problems of Muslims today. □

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



THE DISCOVERY OF OUR HELPLESSNESS

AS a created being, man is in the complete sense, a helpless creature. However, for the purpose of the test of mankind it appears as if he is in control and possesses the power to direct his life. Man should reach beyond this apparent feeling of control and discover his helplessness. This is a great discovery within which lies all the secrets to his success.

The discovery of helplessness is the greatest discovery for any man. This discovery gives him great prospects for remembering and beseeching his Lord. It gives him the opportunity to say:

Oh Lord! You have created man as a helpless being. All Power is only with you and all helplessness is in man. In such a situation, You cannot afford to be indifferent towards me. This is against your Glory as the Creator and Sustainer that You can be indifferent towards Your helpless creatures. It is imperative that between You and Your creation there should be a relationship of a Giver towards the deprived. Only such a relationship befits the glory of God the Beneficent the Merciful.

This is the type of supplication which is considered in the *Hadith* as the

one which will definitely be responded to by God Almighty. When man sincerely beseeches his Lord:

Oh God, You have created me a helpless being,
so now you cannot be indifferent towards me.

**Discover your helplessness. This is a great discovery
within which lies all the secrets to success.**

When a man calls out to his Lord in such a manner, God's mercy reaches him in return faster than the speed of light. God's response is so swift that it welcomes the supplication, rather than the supplication requesting God's response. □



No Need for Disappointment

Recognition always comes after rejection. It is a law of nature.

*If you find that one door is closed for you, don't stop your journey,
try to know the other door. And, you will happily find that
there was one who was ready to receive you.*

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THE SECOND FORBIDDEN TREE

On Earth

ADAM was the first human being. He was originally inhabited in Paradise. There, he had every kind of freedom and all that he desired. But, there was one tree which was forbidden to him. Adam was instructed that he could do anything he wanted except going close to the forbidden tree. If he approached this tree, he would be evicted from Paradise.

This was the forbidden tree of Paradise. There is also a forbidden tree in this world and that is violence. Those who indulge in violence will have to pay a heavy price for this crime. They will be deprived of entry into Paradise.

Violence is an interference in the order of nature established by the Creator and such interference is without doubt the most serious of crimes.

From the Quran we understand that Adam and his spouse were expelled from Paradise and made to settle on earth. During the early part of their life on earth there was a serious conflict between their two sons Qabil and Habil which led to the killing of Habil by Qabil. The Quran says that after this incident, God decreed that:

Whoever killed a human being except as a punishment for murder or for spreading corruption in the land shall be regarded as having killed all mankind, and that whoever saved a human life shall be regarded as having saved all mankind.

THE QURAN 5: 32

Such severe words have not appeared in the Quran for any other crime. From this we can understand that in the eyes of God, the most heinous of crimes is to commit a violent act against another human being. In this matter if there is any exception it is only for an established government after a judicial process. For common man, there is no exception in this matter.

This strict forbidding of violence is because violence is against the system of nature. The order of nature established by the Creator

gives full freedom and opportunity to every man and woman to do as they please. But, violence and conflict destroys this very fabric of nature. Violence is an interference in the order of nature established by the Creator and such interference is without doubt the most serious of crimes.

**If you indulge in passive or active violence, you will
be considered as having eaten of the fruit
of the forbidden tree.**

The question arises as to how can we establish a society free of violence and conflict. There is only one answer to this. Those who fear God should take upon themselves the responsibility of unilaterally showing patience. In spite of experiencing violence they themselves will be free of it. This is the only way a society devoid of violence can be established. According to the Quran, when Qabil wanted to kill Habil, Habil said:

Even if you raise your hand to kill me, I will not raise my hand
to kill you. I fear God the Lord of the Universe.

THE QURAN 5: 28

This is the ultimate example of unilateral patience in the face of violence, as established by Habil, the son of Adam. According to the *Hadith*, the Prophet of Islam said: 'In later times there will be political degeneration but you should never confront your rulers'. One of the companions asked, 'If they should come into our homes to kill us, then what should we do?' The Prophet replied, 'You become the better of the two sons of Adam'. That is, even though you face death at the hands of others, you should not attempt to kill them.

There are two forms of violence; passive and active. Passive violence is that wherein you regard others as oppressors and then show hatred towards them. Active violence is when you deem others as oppressors and instigate and participate in violent acts against them.

Both these types of violence are sins of the same magnitude. If you indulge in any of these types of violence, you will be considered as having eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree. Between the two types of violence the difference is only external in nature. In truth, there is no difference between them at all. □

LIVING IN THE CULTURE OF DISCOVERY

For Intellectual Development

THERE is a Japanese saying: *Discover something new everyday, even if it be a new method of threading a needle.* This saying is based on nature. According to nature, everyone should develop his mind. Intellectual development is a continuous process that happens day and night.

The universe of facts contains innumerable items. If you are an awakened person, if you have a curious mind, and if you are sensitive about your learning, then it is quite possible that every experience, every observation will teach you a new lesson. Each time, you will be able to discover a new idea.

It is only the quality of man that he needs intellectual development. And for this purpose, he needs to discover new things every day.

Discovery is food for the mind, just as physical items are food for the body. When we take lunch or breakfast, we take physical food and thus we make our body energetic. So it is required for intellectual health. We must be so conscious about this fact that we should extract something new from every experience. It all depends upon our intellectual awakening. If you are an intellectually awakened person, then it is quite possible to extract such new items from your observations every day and night.

Without this daily discovery, our mind will be reduced to a dull mind. You will become similar to an animal. Apparently, you will be like a human being, but in fact you will be like an animal.

All animals need physical food, but it is not the requirement of animals to have intellectual food. It is only the quality of man that he needs intellectual development. And for this purpose, he needs to discover new things everyday. This habit makes one a creative person. And only a creative person can do great things in life. □



SCIENCE VERSUS MIRACLES

Authentication of Religious Truths

MAN finds himself in a world where there is creation everywhere but the Creator is apparently unseen. There is design in this world but the designer is nowhere to be found. There are events happening in this world but the one who makes it all happen is hidden from our sights. The whole Universe is working like a magnificent industry but the master engineer who designed this industry cannot be seen even with the help of the most powerful telescopes.

The Prophets taught that behind everything we perceive, there is an unperceivable Supreme Being.

To answer these very questions, Prophets were sent to this world. In all ages, the Prophets taught that behind everything we perceive, there is an unperceivable Supreme Being. This is God, our Lord and Creator, so acknowledge Him and worship Him. In this sense, the role of the prophets in some respects was an inferential role. They showed man that through observations in nature and the universe, he should use his intelligence and derive the inference of an unobservable Creator, thus laying the foundations of belief in God.

In order to authenticate this inferential role the Prophets showed miracles to their people. The Quran speaks about these miracles in these words:

We sent our messengers with evidence ...

THE QURAN 57: 25

These Prophets showed supernatural miracles so that man could believe that the message they brought to them was the true divine message. For instance, Prophet Moses came to the people of Egypt between the 16th and 15th century BC. The Pharaoh of the time, Rameses II was the ruler. He challenged Moses saying:

If you are a true messenger of God show me a miracle.

THE QURAN 7: 106

On this demand of the Pharaoh, Moses threw his staff on the ground which miraculously turned into a slithering serpent.

Muhammad the Prophet of Islam received his prophet-hood in 610 AD in Makkah. All the Prophets before him followed the method of demonstrating supernatural miracles as evidence towards the truthfulness of their message. But with the Prophet of Islam, who was the last link in the chain of Prophets, the method of supernatural miracles came to an end (THE QURAN 17: 59).

**The original text of the prophetic religion is preserved
and the language in which this original text was
revealed is also preserved.**

After the Prophet of Islam, the system of prophethood together with the supernatural miracles they demonstrated was abolished. There will be no further Prophets. Now the prophetic task is continuing through the followers of the Prophet. This is because after the Prophet of Islam, the divine religion in its original form became a completely preserved religion; so much so that now, there is no question of any distortion or changes to this divine message. Now the original text of the prophetic religion is preserved and the language in which this original text was revealed is also preserved.

Now the question is, what is the substitute for the miracles of the Prophets of earlier times? In the earlier days, the truth of the prophetic message was authenticated through miracles. Now, what are the means of authenticating the Prophet's message? The answer to this question is modern scientific knowledge. Present day Science is the replacement for the miracles of ancient times. Now, Science plays the authenticating role that in earlier times was provided by miracles.

These two periods of authentication of the divine message of religion have been clearly mentioned in the Quran. Regarding the first period of authentication the Quran says:

We sent our messengers with evidence ...

THE QURAN 57: 25

The second period of authentication is mentioned in the Quran in the future tense. In this regard the Quran says:

In time we shall show them Our signs in the Universe and
within themselves so that it will become clear unto them
that this [revelation] is indeed the truth.

THE QURAN 41: 53

The Prophet of Islam brought the divine message to mankind in the first quarter of the 7th century A.D., and the scientific age appeared a thousand years later. This scientific age was not a mere co-incidence but was the direct result of the revolutionary message conveyed by the Prophet. With the Prophet's message, for the first time in the history of mankind, the domination of nature worship was abolished. After the end of the worship of nature, a new process of exploration began. The result of this process was the scientific revolution. In ancient times man had taken the wonders of nature as objects of worship. What was thus revered as divine was not treated as a subject of study and research. In this way, the spirit of enquiry was missing due to this mental block.

After the revolutionary message of the Prophet of Islam, a new process in history began. Man became engaged in the research and the study of nature. This continued relentlessly till the scientific discoveries of the modern age. The hitherto hidden secrets of nature were unveiled as natural events. The Quran refers to this as '*the appearance of signs in nature and universe*'. Modern Science is the other name for Natural Sciences. It was the manifestation of the predictions of the Quran. Looking at it in this context, modern Science is a replacement for the miracles of ancient times. It has become the theology of the true religion. Modern Science now provides the veracity to religion that in earlier periods was provided by supernatural miracles.

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There are two aspects of modern science — Theoretical Sciences and Technical Sciences. Theoretical Science uses modern methods to discover the realities of nature. In contrast, Technical Science is the practical application of the scientific discoveries of Theoretical Science. Technical Science led to the development of modern technology which makes use of machines. In this matter, our reference is with regard to Theoretical Science and not Technical Science. According to one *Hadith*, this matter is mentioned in the following words:

Amongst the Prophets, every Prophet was given such signs that his contemporaries would accept or acknowledge, and to me was given the miracle of revelation (Quran).

Therefore, I hope that on the day of judgement
the people who believe in my message
will be more in number.

The fact is that there was little development of human knowledge in early ages. Hence, it was not possible to verify the authenticity of divine religion by means of human knowledge. That is why, in early ages, supernatural miracles were shown by the Prophets. These miracles were limited in nature, being restricted to the contemporaries of the Prophets. But with the revolution that came to this world after the Quran, there was a gradual and continuous development of human knowledge. Then it became possible that through human knowledge itself true religion could be verified and presented to the people.

The argument that the evidence of design in this world proves there exists a designer, is a similar kind of argument as any scientific argument used in the material world.

Another difference between these two periods is that, although the miracles were an experience of veneration for those who witnessed them, the aspect of conviction through reasoning was missing. In the later periods when it became possible for the verification of divine religion through human knowledge, it was natural that this type of verification in contrast was universal. It became possible for every human community to understand and acknowledge the message of the Prophet and accept it on its own rationality. Another natural outcome of this was that the numbers of people who would accept this message could potentially be much more from amongst the later periods.

Ancient miraculous verification and modern scientific verification have a common feature wherein both use the inferential method to authenticate religious truths. In ancient times when the Prophets demonstrated sensory miracles, it was not such that the miracle was a mirror or a perfect representation through which the Prophets divine message became clear. If a human being has performed an act that is beyond human power, then it could be inferred that he is doing so with the help of God. Consequently, it could also be inferred that the message that he is presenting was also from God.

It is the same matter with scientific arguments for religious truths. In scientific arguments, it does not happen that what is presented is the direct demonstrable proof for the premise. Here also, it so happens that the argument presented, indirectly provides the inference for the real premise to be understood or acknowledged. However, modern

scientific arguments have one superior facet as they are established on the basis of rational axioms of the people.

This difference was the result of developments in nuclear science. Early physical sciences were limited to the macro world or the macro universe. At that time it was believed that everything had a measurable physical form. Developments in the 20th century allowed man to penetrate the micro world and changed this scenario. Now it is known that matter in its ultimate form is so small that it could only be considered as 'waves of probability'.

These developments in the nuclear science created a revolution in knowledge, one aspect of which was that the standard of rational argument changed. Now, the inferential argument was as accepted and acknowledged as a direct argument. Knowledge had reached a stage where a direct observable argument was not possible. Hence, it became mandatory that inferential argument be given the same standing as a direct argument so that the new discoveries of the micro world could be further developed. These developments of human knowledge made it possible for religious truths to be presented in the same manner as those used in the material world. For instance, the argument that the evidence of design in this world proves there exists a designer, is a similar kind of argument as any scientific argument used in the material world.

It has become possible for man to use supporting arguments from rational human knowledge to establish the truth of the divine message.

Now modern scientific knowledge has taken the place of the miracles presented by the early Prophets. Religious truths which were presented on the weight of supernatural miracles in ancient times can now be understood on the basis of accepted human knowledge. Today's bearer of truth does not need to show any miracles in order to support his message. It has become possible for him to use supporting arguments from rational human knowledge to establish the truth of his message. He can address the modern mind on the basis of the same knowledge that has already been accepted and acknowledged as true. □



MIRACULOUS NINE DAYS

Divine Protection

ACCORDING to researchers at University of California, Berkeley, a rapid succession of coronal mass ejections — the most intense eruptions on the sun — sent a pulse of magnetized plasma barreling into space and through Earth's orbit. The massive magnetic storm had a speed of 3,000 km per second — enough to circle Earth five times in one minute. Had the eruption come nine days earlier, when the ignition spot on the solar surface was aimed exactly at Earth, it would have hit the planet.

In a paper appearing on March 18, 2014 in the journal *Nature Communications*, researchers say that the solar burst tore through Earth's orbit but, fortunately, Earth and the other planets were on the other side of the sun at the time. Had Earth been in the line of sight, it would have suffered severe magnetic storms as the magnetic field of the outburst would have tangled with the planet's own magnetic field. This would have wreaked havoc with the electrical grid, disabling satellites and GPS, and disrupting our increasingly electronic lives.

What was this “luck”? In fact, it was an intervention by the Lord of the Universe.

According to this report, a massive magnetic storm erupted on the surface of the sun on July 22, 2012. This event may have proved to be destructive for the planet Earth. But, luck saved us from this havoc. And, that luck was that Earth was on the other side of the sun at that time.

What was this 'luck'? In fact, it was an intervention by the Lord of the Universe. In the vast space, these solar bursts happen very often. However, every time our planet remains safe from danger. This phenomenon is proof that there is a high control of checks and balances in the universe. It is this control that saves us from being victims of those solar bursts. This universal management has been mentioned in the Quran in these words:

Say, 'Who will save you from the wrath of the Most Gracious, by night and by day?' Yet they turn away from the remembrance of their Lord.

THE QURAN 21:42 ◻

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**

[This is] a Book, with verses which are fundamental [in nature], and then expounded in detail by One who is all wise and all aware. [It teaches] that you should worship none but God. I am sent to you from Him to warn you and to give you good tidings. Seek forgiveness from your Lord; then turn towards Him [in repentance]. He will make generous provision for you for an appointed term and will bestow His grace on all who merit it! But if you turn away, then I fear for you the torment of a dreadful Day: to God you shall all return; and He has power over all things. (11: 1-4)

The message of the Quran is that man should not worship anyone except the one and only God. He should make the one and only God his everything; he should fear Him alone and repose his hopes in Him alone; his mind and heart should obey Him alone. In the affairs of his life, he should give prior consideration to His will and pleasure. He should be willing to place himself in the position of a worshipper and give God the status of the worshipped one.

The task of the prophet is, in fact, that of making man aware of this position. This has been powerfully and lucidly described in the Quran. Now, what is expected of man is that he should give the correct response to the divine message. He should not ignore it under the influence of such feelings as jealousy, hauteur, vested interest or self-centredness, but duly accept it and turn towards God. He should seek God's pardon for his past sins and, for the future, he should solicit God's help.

If food is presented to a man and he accepts it, it means that he intends to stimulate his physical growth. On the contrary, if he does not accept the food, it is as if he means to stunt his physical growth. The same

holds for the call to the Truth. When a man accepts the Truth, in reality he accepts that Divine provision which enters into him and causes the righteous growth of his soul and his body, and finally takes him to that stage of his spiritual progress which entitles him to enter the Gardens of Paradise.

One who does not accept the call to the Truth has, in effect, deprived his soul of the opportunities afforded by Divine uplifting. While the acceptor of Truth lives in modesty, the rejecter of Truth will be flawed by hauteur.

While the acceptor of Truth will spend each moment of his life in the remembrance of God, the denier of God will spend his time in the remembrance of beings other than God. While the acceptor of Truth adopts the way of obedience to God on all occasions in his life, the denier will instead adopt the way of arrogance.

The result of this will be that the former will leave this world with a healthy and developed soul and will be treated as deserving of being settled in the rarefied atmosphere of Paradise. The soul of the latter will be unhealthy and under-developed and will deserve only to be thrown on to the garbage dump of hell.

See how they cover themselves up to hide [their thoughts] from Him. But when they cover themselves up with their garments, He knows what they hide and what they reveal. He knows their innermost thoughts.

There is not a living creature on the earth but it is for God to provide its sustenance. He knows its dwelling and its [final] resting place. All this is recorded in a clear book. (11: 5-6)

When the call to the unity of God (*tawheed*) was made to certain chiefs of the Quraysh, they rose and, nonchalantly donning their mantles, they left.

This is, in fact, a way of ignoring something. When a man considers a preacher lowly in comparison to himself, he behaves in this way. But he forgets that Almighty God knows very well the psychology of his doing so. This is not only ignoring a man (the preacher) but amounts also to ignoring God Himself, Who knows all open and hidden matters.

And then, what will be man's condition when he faces God? He will

see that God, whom he had ignored, was the Being who gave him all that he possessed—even those things on the strength of which he had ignored the word of God. Man is living in God's world and ultimately he has to return to his Maker. But he lives as if he has no connection with God today and will have nothing to do with Him in the future. □



Make yourself deserving of God's help

The notion that God helps those who help themselves means that although man's role is a very minor one, it is nevertheless a very necessary one. We must never, therefore, neglect to make ourselves deserving of God's nourishment.



Do not be a slave to your desires

It is a fact that the human mind is full of desires but, at the same time, it is also true that man's mind has the capacity for logical thought.

When you find that your mind is overwhelmed by desire, examine that desire in the light of reality. Assess it in terms of its potential results, and find out objectively whether it is feasible or not to fulfil it.

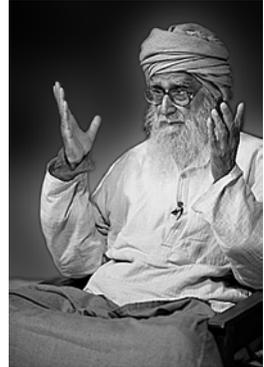
Then, after examining it completely, if you are satisfied that its results will be beneficial, fulfil your desire.

ASK MAULANA

Your Questions, Answered

Is today's economic crisis in the world the result of unlimited freedom of the business community?

The economic crisis is not because of unlimited freedom, but the true reason is the unlimited lust for accumulating wealth. This kind of lust goes against the law of nature. Nature has provided things only in a limited quantity. Thus, if you try to acquire things without any limitation, it would certainly lead to a crisis. It is this natural fact that has been expressed by Mahatma Gandhi in these words: "The world has enough for man's need, but not enough for man's greed."



Please explain how to develop God-oriented thinking in this material environment.

God-oriented thinking cannot be obtained by going into seclusion and engaging in meditation. It is developed through contemplation on the experiences and observations of daily life. Our environment has two aspects: outwardly, it is material, but at the same time it has spiritual content. You have to extract that spiritual content, just as the honeybee extracts the nectar content from the flower. This spiritual extraction is the only way of developing God-oriented thinking.

Many say that if we live a life of simplicity or an ascetic life, how will the economy run? Please comment.

Simplicity is the lifestyle of an individual, it has no connection with the economy. JRD Tata, for example, was very simple as far his personal life was concerned, yet he was able to establish an industrial empire in India.

How should a person manage his expenditure within his means of income?

Learn the art of differentiation between need and luxury. When you are able to discern this difference, you will certainly be able to easily manage your expenditure, whatever be your income.

Why is it that people remember God only when they are in trouble? While, when they are enjoying the good things of life, they don't acknowledge God.

It is a general feature that people do good things when there is compulsion. Otherwise, they fail to do good things. It is this human psychology that causes people to remember God only when they are in trouble; that is, when they are in compulsive situations. But, reward is for those who remember God without there being any compulsion to do so.

Many people say, "Materialism and spirituality cannot co-exist". Please explain.

It is not a matter of coexistence; because, materialism and spirituality are not contradictory. Spirituality is the inner content of materialism, and materialism is the outer content of spirituality. It all depends on one's intellectual awakening. One who is an intellectually awakened person can combine both these without any problem.

Often, people are of the opinion that the right time to indulge in spirituality and God-oriented thinking is after one has attained a certain status in life and reached a particular age. Please comment.

This kind of thinking is completely wrong. Spirituality is the most important part of one's life. We need spirituality in every period of our life. The only fact is that when a person is immature, he needs to take advice from elders, and when he is mature he can take decisions on his own.

Why is it so difficult for man to accept his limitations and why does he keep nurturing the illusion that he knows it all?

Man is born with an insatiable nature. This nature is meant to provide impetus to him, so that he can continuously engage in struggle. But, sometimes people fail to accept the reality, so they take a jump that is not within their capacity. This is a well-known saying for such persons:

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. □



Glossary

- Alim** religious scholar
- Abdullah ibn Abbas** (618-687 AD); cousin and companion of the Prophet Muhammad.
- Abdullah ibn Masud** died 650 AD; companion of the Prophet Muhammad
- Abdullah ibn Umar** (614-693 AD); companion of the Prophet Muhammad; son of Umar bin al Khattab, the second Muslim Caliph.
- Abu Bakr Siddiq** died 632 AD; a close companion of the Prophet; also the first Muslim Caliph.
- Abu Dharr al-Ghifari** died 652 AD; companion of the Prophet Muhammad.
- Abu Dawud** (817-889 AD); Abu Dawud as-Sijistani; Persian Islamic scholar and compiler of *Hadith*; authored the Sunan Abi Dawud *Hadith* collection.
- Abu Hurairah** died 681 AD; a companion of the Prophet known for his photographic memory.
- Ahimsa** Sanskrit for 'do no harm'; denotes the principle of non-violence, one of the cardinal virtues of major Indian religions.
- Al-Bukhari; Imam Al-Bukhari** (810–870 AD); Muhammad Al-Bukhari; Persian Islamic scholar who authored the Hadith collection known as *Sahih al-Bukhari* regarded as the most authentic collection of *Hadith*.
- Al-Qurtubi**(1214-1273 AD); Abu Abdullah al-Qurtabi, Islamic scholar most famous for his commentary of the Quran, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*.
- As-Salaam** The Peace; The Source of Peace and Security; one of the names (attributes) of God.
- Dar us Salaam** Home of Peace; referred to as Paradise.
- dawah** communication of the message of God.
- Fiqh** Islamic jurisprudence.
- fujaha** Islamic jurists.
- Habil** Abel, the second son of Adam; was murdered by his elder brother Qabil (Cain)
- Hadith** sayings and deeds of the Prophet of Islam.
- Hasan ibn Thabit** died 674 AD; companion of the Prophet Muhammad.
- Ibn Hisham** Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Malik bin Hisham; Islamic historian well known for editing the biography of Prophet Muhammad written by Ibn Ishaq.
- Jihad** struggle in the way of God.
- Jinn** A living creation of God made from fire; *Jinns* have free-will just like mankind.
- Kabah** the sacred house of God built originally by prophets Abraham and Ismael in Makkah (present day Mecca).
- Khilafat-e-Rashida** also Rashidun Caliphate or "Rightly Guided" caliphs (632–661 AD) is the collective term comprising the first four caliphs in Islamic history (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali).
- mahal** palace
- Madinah** Medina; also called Yathrib during the time of Prophet Muhammad.
- Makkah** Mecca.
- Makkan** from or of Makkah (Mecca).
- Mishkat al-Masabih** secondary text of Hadith collection by Hadith scholar Khatib al-Tabrizi (d. 1340 AD).
- Orientalist** scholar of Oriental studies; one who studies Asian and Middle Eastern societies and history.
- Qabil** also Cain; the first born son of Adam.
- qaumi** belonging to *qaum* (community)
- Qibla** also qiblah; direction of the Kabah, the sacred house of God.
- Qital** armed warfare.
- Quraysh** the dominant tribe of Makkah during the time when Prophet Mohammad was born; genealogical ancestry traced to prophets Abraham and Ismael.
- Sabr** Patience
- Sahifat al-Madinah** a secular declaration for society in Madinah made by the Prophet of Islam as head of the state.

Salah also *Salat*; the Islamic prayer.
Seerah also *Seerat* or *Seerath*; Prophet's biography.
Shariah moral code and religious law of Islam.
silm Peace
status quoism to keep things the way they presently are; from status quo, Latin term for 'existing state of affairs'.
summum bonum Latin expression meaning 'the highest good'.
Sunnah practice and teachings of Prophet Muhammad.

Surah chapter of the Quran.
tabe'ee those followers who directly learned from the Companions of the Prophet of Islam.
tawheed Monotheism, or the oneness of God.
Ulema also *ulama*; religious scholars.
Ummah religious community; followers of a prophet.
Uqabah bin Nafae (622-683 AD); Arab general who brought the message of Islam to North west Africa.



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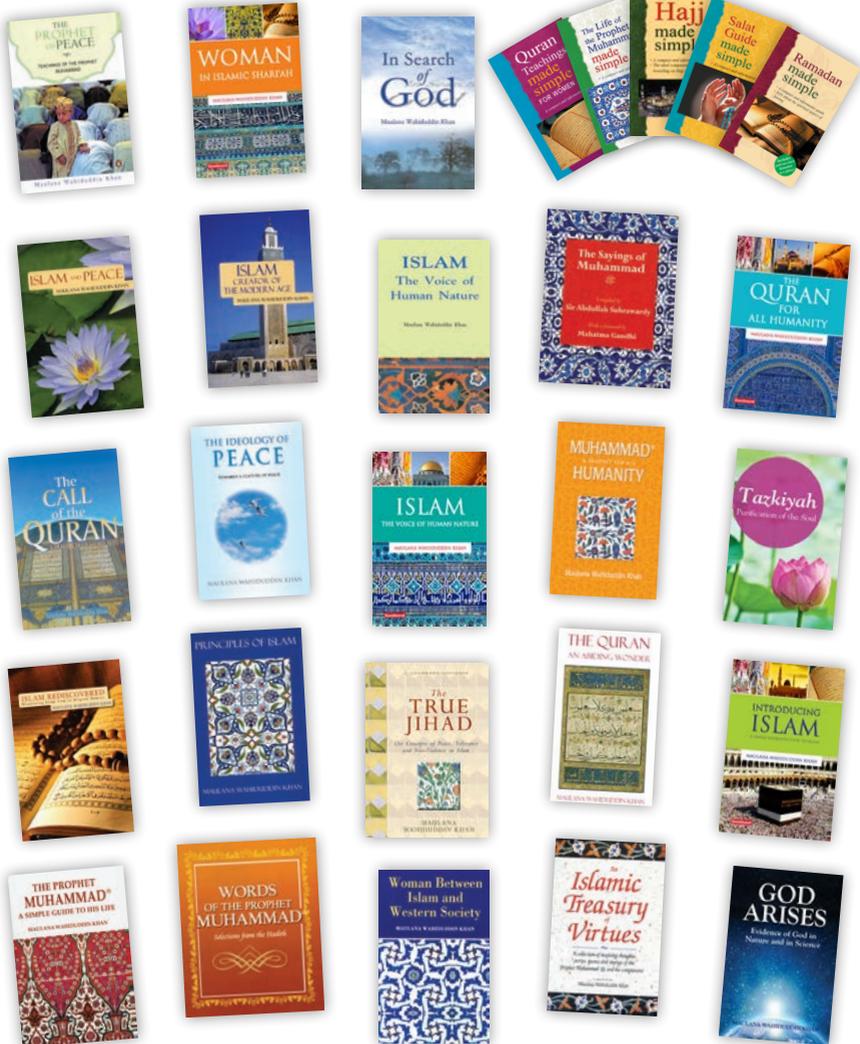
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