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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

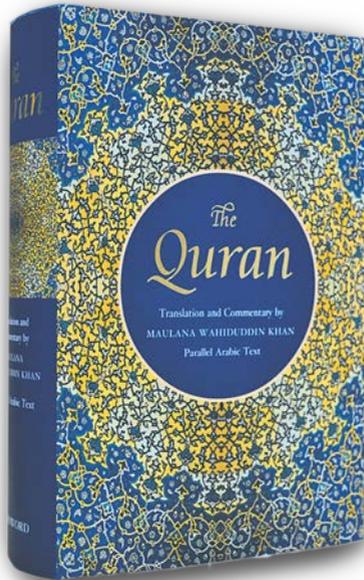


He who is most in error is one
who cannot say, 'I have erred.'

The Quran

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY
MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN
PARALLEL ARABIC TEXT

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



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

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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

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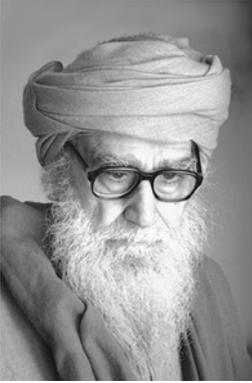
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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

TARGETED THERAPY

TARGETED THERAPY is a term used in the medical sciences. There are about 25,000 genes in the human body. Targeted therapy is a type of treatment that targets those specific genes that contribute to cancer growth, while leaving out other genes.

To bring about change in human life, the starting point is to first change the human mind by bringing about change in the thinking process.

Targeted therapy includes drugs that are aimed at specific genes that are only found in cancer cells that contribute to cancer growth and survival. This selective treatment carried out on a selective basis, is called targeted therapy.

The same technique is required with regard to human reform. The basic factor governing the human being is the mind. There is a saying in the Bible:

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.

Proverbs 23: 7

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

Therefore, to bring about change in human life, the starting point is to change the thinking process of the human mind. The method of targeted therapy is useful for most aspects of human life. This principle is beneficial for maintaining the physical health of the human body and also in developing a healthy personality.

Many people speak about the necessity of social reform. In spite of all the enormous efforts being done in this regard, there is a lack of results, because the starting point is not correct.

The correct starting point is to address the individual mind with the aim of revolutionizing the thinking of the individual. This is the right way of social reform. No other method will work in this regard. □

Maulana Wahiddudin Khan

editor@thespiritofislam.org



The Art of Acceptance

*One has to accept certain things in life
either willingly or unwillingly.*

*Learn the art of acceptance.
It is easy to reject, but only a great mind can accept.*

*Acceptance is a phenomenon of maturity.
Man is a justification-seeking being.*

*So, maturity means the ability to justify your action.
Maturity means more knowledge, more experience.
It is a process that occurs on
an unconscious level.*

*If you are a developed mind then consciously or unconsciously
you will be able to analyse things instantly.*

*You will not need to
refer to books, data or an encyclopedia.*

SIGNS OF GOD

Mathematical Precision in Nature

THE Scottish physicist James Clerk Maxwell, represented the laws of electromagnetic interactions in mathematical equations so beautifully, that when the great Austrian physicist Ludwig Boltzmann saw them he exclaimed, "Who was the God who wrote these signs?"

$\oiint_{\partial\Omega} \mathbf{E} \cdot d\mathbf{S} = \frac{1}{\epsilon_0} \iiint_{\Omega} \rho dV$	$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{E} = \frac{\rho}{\epsilon_0}$
$\oiint_{\partial\Omega} \mathbf{B} \cdot d\mathbf{S} = 0$	$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{B} = 0$
$\oint_{\partial\Sigma} \mathbf{E} \cdot d\boldsymbol{\ell} = -\frac{d}{dt} \iint_{\Sigma} \mathbf{B} \cdot d\mathbf{S}$	$\nabla \times \mathbf{E} = -\frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t}$
$\oint_{\partial\Sigma} \mathbf{B} \cdot d\boldsymbol{\ell} = \mu_0 \iint_{\Sigma} \mathbf{J} \cdot d\mathbf{S} + \mu_0 \epsilon_0 \frac{d}{dt} \iint_{\Sigma} \mathbf{E} \cdot d\mathbf{S}$	$\nabla \times \mathbf{B} = \mu_0 \left(\mathbf{J} + \epsilon_0 \frac{\partial \mathbf{E}}{\partial t} \right)$

To a keen observer of the Universe the most astounding fact is that every study of nature culminates in a conclusion that is incredibly meaningful and intelligent. Every study of the Universe shows that it has not been randomly put together but impeccably planned and systematically organized. This obvious fact compels an observer to acknowledge that a supreme intelligence is responsible for the creation and functioning of the universe.

Albert Einstein was of a purely scientific temperament. In spite of this, he has acknowledged that he is more of a philosopher than a physicist.

I am more a philosopher than a physicist, for I believe
there is a reality outside of us.

The World As I See It

With this belief, Einstein would say about himself, "In this sense, I belong to the ranks of devoutly religious men."

Nature is a sign of God and speaks to us about God. As a creation of God, it presents a picture of its Creator. One who observes nature and the universe with an open mind is sure to discover its Creator. Nevertheless, a biased mind will remain in darkness in the midst of light and will be unable to find God in the midst of God's signs. □

LEARN THE ART OF EGO MANAGEMENT

Secrets to Healthy Social Living

EGO is an innate faculty of every human being. It has a very important role to play in the personality of every man and woman. This is because ego is the source of self-consciousness. It is the source of conviction, confidence and determination. In this sense, it is a great strength of every human being. Thus, ego is a healthy phenomenon. In the absence of the ego-spirit, man cannot do anything, and as far as great achievements are concerned, they are impossible without the ego-spirit.

This is the positive aspect of ego. But, at the same time there is a negative aspect also. It is this negative aspect that creates problems. Being a social animal man has to live amongst people—both within the family and outside the family. In other words, social living is an intrinsic requirement of every person. It is this social contact that leads to problems. When one is alone one's ego is in the dormant position. But, when one is in society, one is bound to come into contact with other people. Due to this, every moment there is a chance to experience situations which could lead to ego clashes.

**Social life is an asset for everyone and at the same time,
it is accompanied by the negative experiences
of ego clashes.**

Everywhere in nature, there is diversity. It is an essential part of nature's scheme. So is the case with man. Every man or woman, is born with a different personality. Society, thus, is a combination of different personalities. It is this difference in tastes, ways of thinking, and modes of expression that creates problems. What is called an ego-problem is actually a phenomenon of living amongst different people.

It is said that when one's ego is stoked, it turns into a super-ego and the result is breakdown. This saying is right, but it should be understood in the right perspective. It is a phenomenon of social living and not a phenomenon of solitary living. Society creates problems for individuals, but at the same time it is a fact that no one can live alone. In social life everyone shares with other people. It is this 'sharing culture' that

helps individuals to develop their personality and to bring their plans to completion. Without this sharing nothing is possible for any man or woman.

Every person is like a rose plant, in that he has a 'flower content' and at the same time he has a 'thorn content'. It is this double sagacity of every person that should be accepted as a reality. When a person comes into contact with the 'flower content' of another, he remains normal. However, when he comes into contact with the 'thorn content' of the other person, his ego flares up. It is but natural to have this kind of double experience in social life. One has to accept the thorn in the same way that one accepts the flower. Failing this, one will have to suffer irreparable loss. In terms of sharing, social life is an asset for everyone and at the same time, it is accompanied by the negative experiences of ego clashes.

Every person is like a rose plant, in that he has a 'flower content' and at the same time he has a 'thorn content'.

Then what should be done in such a situation? The art of ego management is the only solution to this problem. Ego management is the price of social living. Every commodity has an inevitable price; without paying this price one cannot acquire that commodity. So is the case of reaping the benefits of social living. If one wants to enjoy the benefits of social living one will have to learn the art of ego management.

Ego problem is one's personal problem. Others will not pay its price; one has to manage it on one's own. Here there are only two choices: either manage the ego problem and prosper, or fail in its management and end in disaster. □



What is Wisdom?

*Wisdom is to differentiate between trivial matters and real issues.
Without this sagacity, you cannot do anything
worthwhile for yourself or for society.*

THE CULTURE OF PEACE — Part VI

Teachings of Islam

We often talk of peace in the context of war. But this is a very narrow and restricted notion of peace. The fact is that peace is deeply linked with the whole of human life. Peace is a complete ideology in itself. It is the master-key that opens the doors to every sort of success. Peace creates a favourable atmosphere for success in every sort of endeavour. Without peace, no positive action—small or big—is at all possible.

Violence, a Result of Frustration

VIOLENCE results from a sense of being deprived, while peace is the result of a sense of attainment or achievement. People who think they have been deprived or robbed of something of their's by others always remain immersed in negative thinking. This feeling is often expressed in the form of violence. On the other hand, those who feel that they have achieved something in life experience peace of mind. They always lead peaceful lives.

**Violence results from a sense of being deprived,
while peace is the result of a sense of
attainment or achievement.**

Individuals and groups that hate others, sometimes going to the extent of inflicting violence against them, prove by their actions that they feel they have been deprived. In contrast, individuals and groups who live peacefully prove by their actions that they have achieved what they wanted to in life.

What is the reason that some people feel deprived? And, who are those others who always live with a sense of achievement or attainment?

The greatest attainment in life is to find God, while the greatest deprivation is to fail to find Him. If you have found God, nothing else remains for you to find. In contrast, those who fail to find God suffer the maximum possible deprivation, and then nothing can cure them of their sense of deprivation.

Waiting Is Also A Solution

Awaiting the bounteous abundance of God is an excellent form of

worship—this is what we learn from a *Hadith* report in the collection by at-Tirmidhi.

Every individual and group repeatedly faces difficult situations. On such occasions, people, whether consciously or otherwise, take this difficulty to be a permanent condition, and so they immediately begin to fight against it. But this sort of fighting always proves to be futile. Its only outcome is that it adds some more difficulties to an already difficult situation.

The greatest attainment in life is to find God, while the greatest deprivation is to fail to find Him.

No difficult situation lasts forever. It is always temporary. And so, the only easy solution of a difficulty is to adopt a policy of waiting. That is to say, one should not unnecessarily start fighting against a difficult situation. Instead, one should simply adopt a 'wait-and-see' policy. As a result of this policy, you will save yourself from losing peace of mind, and whatever has to happen will happen, in its own time.

When people are faced with a problem, they generally look for an instantaneous solution. This is the underlying problem. If, instead, one adopts a 'wait-and-see' approach, then the problem will no longer remain a problem at all.

Divine Warning, Not Oppression by Fellow Humans

According to a *Hadith*, the Prophet is said to have predicted with regard to the Muslim *ummah* that soon people would summon one another against them just as when eating, people call others to share their meal. (Musnad Ahmad)

Events show that this prediction came true in the second half of the 18th century. To begin with, this happened through the agency of European colonialists. The Europeans later were joined by other communities. And this process is continuing till today. The question is: Why did this happen?

A study of the Quran reveals that this happened directly in accordance with the practice of God. God's practice in this regard is that He sends warnings to communities or peoples to wake them up. This is a sort of shock treatment to jolt people and make them reform themselves.

As God says:

When the affliction decreed by Us befell them, they did not humble themselves, but rather their hearts hardened, for Satan had made all their doings seem fair to them.

THE QURAN 6: 43

This Quranic verse mentions a common human tendency—of dressing up a bad deed in beautiful-sounding words so that its wrongness is concealed. This is exactly what has happened with Muslims in present times. Present-day Muslim leaders have, consciously or otherwise, done exactly what this Quranic verse decries.

Those who fail to find God suffer the maximum possible deprivation, and then nothing can cure them of their sense of deprivation.

The problems that present-day Muslims face from other communities are foretold as Divine warnings. However, Muslim leaders began expressing these problems in terms of 'oppression' and 'conspiracies'. As a result of this, Muslims failed to see that these events had occurred in order for them to realise their own mistakes and turn to their own internal reform. But Muslims did not realise this, and owing to the erroneous guidance of Muslim leaders, the entire focus of Muslims was directed onto, and against, other communities. These events were intended to make Muslims begin to introspect, but they came to be wrongly deployed in order to criticise other peoples. This tendency began magnifying over time, until today where it has assumed the form of violence and militancy.

The Power of Silence

Umar Farooq, the second Muslim Caliph, is said to have remarked, 'Destroy falsehood (*batal*) by keeping silent about it.'

According to the Law of Nature, truth is destined to live and falsehood is doomed to die. And so, to finish off falsehood it is enough just to keep silent about it. To talk about it or to demonstrate against it is only to give it life. To ignore falsehood and to remain silent on it causes its death.

Remaining silent on falsehood simply means to ignore it. It means

not expressing any reaction to it in any way whatsoever. It means not protesting against it. Only those who have realised the power of Nature and have full faith in it can respond to falsehood in this way. Those who are bereft of this realization agitate against falsehood, and, in doing so, become a foundation for giving it life.

Positive Status-Quoism

As soon as you want to do something, you find yourself faced with some hurdle or the other. This happens in the case of individuals as well as entire communities. Now, one way to react to is to first fight against these hurdles in order to try to get rid of them and then to begin whatever work one wants to. This is what is conventionally called 'radicalism'.

Radicalism seems to appeal to certain highly emotional people—those with a proclivity to extremism. Yet, it is not useful for any sort of positive purpose. Radicalism is effective only for destruction, not for construction. It not only causes the destruction of an existing system, but also leads to the destruction of social traditions that have evolved over centuries.

People are subjected to unspeakable horrors because of the bloodshed and disruption wrought by radicalism. Experience indicates that although it may appear attractive at the ideological level to some people, in terms of its practical consequences radicalism has nothing positive about it at all.

Awaiting the bounteous abundance of God is an excellent form of worship.

Another way to respond to the challenges one inevitably faces in life is to totally avoid confrontation with a given situation, and instead, to plan one's efforts remaining within the limits of possibility. Accepting for the time being, the given status quo, one can use the opportunities that still remain available. This method can be termed as 'positive status-quoism'.

Radicalism always produces violence and exacerbates a given problem. In contrast, positive status quoism fulfils its purpose without creating any problems in society while preserving social peace. The former leads to destruction, the latter to constructive action.

The method of reform that the Prophet Muhammad used in ancient Arabia was that of positive status-quoism. For instance, at that time, there were 360 idols inside the Kaaba. But in the early Quranic revelations no order was revealed to remove these idols from the Kaaba. Instead, in this initial period the Quran announced, 'purify your garments' (THE QURAN 74:4). This meant purification of one's moral character, and that of others, too.

No Justification For Violence

Violence is against human nature. It murders humanity. It is the most heinous of all crimes. Yet, despite this fact, why do some people still engage in violence? The reason is very simple: Such people fabricate a justification for violence, and then they begin to believe that their violence is justified.

Radicalism only exacerbates a given problem. In contrast, positive status-quoism fulfils its purpose without creating any problems in society.

But the fact remains that every single justification or pretext that is offered for violence is false. Whenever an individual or group engages in violence, there also exists, at the very same time, the possibility of choosing non-violent or peaceful methods. Yet, in such a situation, violence is still their choice.

The fact is that violence is to be abandoned completely and peace is to be accepted completely. One should never resort to violence under any pretext whatsoever. No matter what the conditions are, one must necessarily remain firmly wedded to peaceful methods.

Solving Enmities

People often think of certain communities as their enemies. And then, on the basis of this imaginary perception, they start fighting against these communities, supposedly to save themselves from the consequences of their enmity. This imaginary enemy of theirs is, however, wholly false. And so are whatever actions they are engaged in to counter this so-called enemy's imagined threat.

Enmity is not a constant aspect of human existence, unlike, say, the fingers of one's hands. It is just a superficial aspect of human existence.

Through positive actions, every enmity can be ended. It is like a bit of dirt that stains a glass. This bit of dirt can easily be removed—by simply washing it off with some water. A bit of dirt on a glass is not a problem in itself. The problem is created when you do not have clean water to wash it off.

It always takes two hands to clap. You cannot clap with just one hand. In the same way, enmity is a two-sided affair. If someone considers you his enemy, you can respond by considering him your potential friend. In this way, his enmity will automatically cease. The most effective way to end the problem of enmity is not to be an enemy of someone who sees you as his enemy.

Stockpiling Weapons is Useless

A successful businessman was very concerned about the safety of his family from the danger of harm from people of another community in the neighbourhood. His strategy to keep them family safe was to buy a licensed gun for each member of his family. 'Now I think that I and my family are safe,' he said. 'I have no fear of riots now.'

**If someone considers you his enemy, you can respond
by considering him your potential friend.**

This person might have known the principles of business but he was unaware of the principles for social existence. One cannot protect oneself with a gun or a revolver. The way to be safe in society is to be a good neighbour to others. Let the neighbours be safe from your harm and inevitably, you will find that you will also be safe amongst them. Hatred will beget hatred. If we are concerned about others' well being, in turn we will receive love and concern from them.

The futility and repercussions of using a gun are obvious. If riots were to break out, would the action of shooting people with guns end the matter? Impossible. One should know that firing on people is a cognizable offence.

Violence against another community may seem like two equal parties fighting each other, but it is a different equation if one were to fight with the police. Using a gun in this scenario is like inviting an angry bull to attack. Obviously, then, this sort of step is not protection, instead it will be self-invited devastation.

Conscience, the Best Judge

Two men belonging to different religious backgrounds were neighbours. One of them built a house. A controversy arose between him and his neighbour who was a contractor over an adjacent portion of land. Each one claimed the land belonged to him. The contractor accused his neighbour, who had constructed the house to be in the wrong and instigated some of his brethren who gathered outside the man's house and indulged in raising slogans against the neighbour.

Whenever an individual or group engages in violence, there also exists, at the very same time, the possibility of choosing non-violent or peaceful methods.

The other man had a gun with him, but he did not use it. Instead, he came out of his house alone and empty-handed. He did not say a word to the slogan-raising crowd except to ask them who their leader was. A man stepped out of the crowd, saying that he was their leader and asked him what he wanted.

The man turned to the crowd and requested them to remain where they were. Then, he took their leader into his house and requested him to be seated. He asked the leader why the crowd had gathered outside.

The leader angrily replied, 'You have grabbed our brother's property, and that's why we have come here.'

The man gently said, 'You are aware that the name of the rightful owner of any property is mentioned in the official documents. These documents decide who the rightful owner of a plot is. So, what you should do is to take my documents and those of my contractor neighbour and examine them. You be the judge in this matter. After studying both our documents, I will unconditionally accept whatever decision you arrive at.'

At this, the leader suddenly calmed down and became friendly. He had entered the Muslim's house in a rage, but he now stepped out all smiles. Then, he addressed the crowd outside, saying, 'You all go back to your homes. *Mijan-ji* (a term of respect for a Muslim man) has himself made me the judge in this affair. I will see his and the contractor's documents and come to a decision.'

Accordingly, the leader went home and studied both sets of documents. And in a few days time he gave a decision that was wholly in favour of the Muslim man.

If the Muslim man had reacted to the crowd by grabbing his gun and firing, it would certainly have provoked the angry demonstrators' egotism, or *nafs-e ammara*. And then things would have gone totally against him. But by using wisdom and reasonableness instead of a gun, he awakened their conscience, or *nafs-e lawwama*. And when the conscience awakens, its decision is always in favour of justice. It never decides in favour of oppression and injustice.

Victory Can Also Be Defeat

Pyrrhus was a Greek king who lived in the third century B.C. He fought the Romans and was victorious over them. But in the course of this war, his army and the entire economy of his kingdom were badly devastated. It was a superficial victory for Pyrrhus, but, from the point of view of its results, it was synonymous with defeat. On the basis of this historical incident, the phrase 'Pyrrhic victory' came into being. It refers to what seems, on the face of it, to be a victory, but what in reality is a complete defeat.

The way to protect yourself in society is to become a good neighbour for the people around you.

If you examine the history of war in general, it will not be an exaggeration to say that most victories turn out to be 'Pyrrhic victories'. Every victor has to necessarily face two types of loss—one, destruction of life and property, and the other, a burning hatred in the heart of the defeated party. No victor can escape these two losses. If there is at all any difference in this regard, it is that some victors have to face these losses at once, while others have to contend with them at a later stage.

This question of loss is connected only with the use of violent methods. The question of peaceful methods is entirely different. Peaceful methods lead only, and always, to victory and nothing else. There is no question of defeat at all as far as the choice of these methods is concerned, so much so that even if the result of using peaceful methods appears in the form of what seems to be a defeat, it is still actually a victory. This is because by using peaceful means one may lose a war but one does not

lose the available opportunities. These opportunities and possibilities still remain open to him. Availing these, he can start new efforts and journey towards success.

Stop Complaining At Once

A complaining mentality makes people think negatively. A person who always complains is rendered incapable of thinking positively. And this sort of mentality is, without a shred of doubt, the root of all ills. In most cases of violence, it is this mentality of constant complaint that is seen to be at work.

**If you have found God, nothing else
remains for you to find.**

This world has been created in such a way that it is inevitable that people will keep having complaints about each other. In this regard, what we need to do is to dispel the thought of a complaint about others as soon as it enters our minds. However, what generally happens is that a complaint is formed, first in our conscious minds, and then, if we constantly obsess about it, gradually it seeps into our unconsciousness. Then it becomes so deeply entrenched that after this it cannot be extricated.

In this situation, the wise approach is to nip all complaints in the bud. You should remove them as soon as they appear in your mind. If you fail to do this, they will gradually become an integral part of your psyche and your thinking will become negative. You will start thinking of others as your enemies.

You might even—given the opportunity—resort to practical confrontation and physical violence towards those you have complaints against, even if this is entirely counter-productive for you.

The method for nipping complaints in the bud is suggested in the following Quranic verse:

Whatever misfortune befalls you is of your own doing [...]

THE QURAN 42: 30

This means that whenever you have a complaint against somebody,

what you should immediately do is to turn the direction of the complaint towards yourself. You should search for some explanation of the issue in which you yourself emerge as the culprit. When you realise that the mistake is actually yours, and not someone else's, you will set yourself to rectifying your mistake and not waste time making unnecessary demands and protesting against some imaginary enemy. □

This article is the concluding part of a series entitled 'The Culture of Peace' that commenced from Issue 19 (July 2014).



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THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

Answers to Your Questions

MAN is in constant search of answers to many questions. Who am I? Where did I come from? What is the purpose of my life? Why do I have so many unfulfilled desires? What happens to me after death? The questions are many but answers can only be found with the realization of God.

Realization of God (*ma'arifat*) has the greatest importance in religion. Realization is not like a stone, rather it is like a 'tree' that keeps growing continuously. The Quran says: "Their faith grows stronger as they listen to His revelations" (THE QURAN 8: 2). It is creative thinking, which is the source of this ever-growing realization of God. With this deeper sense of realization, a person can draw sustenance or food for *ma'arifat* from every incident and from every experience.

Creative thinking is the source of an ever-growing realization of God.

All-India Radio broadcasts news every hour. In between there are other programs. As the radio was switched on for the news, a line from a song could be heard. *Barbaad main yahan hoon, aabaad tu kahan hai*. A simple translation of these words would be, *Here, I am in peril and where are you free of all peril?* To a creative mind, these words can be food for God-realization. These heart-rending words of the song appear to be the voice of every human soul; the voice of man in a state of constant pain calling out to his Lord, 'You created me and put me into a world which is not my eternal habitat.'

Why does man feel he is in peril? Unlike animals who are contented in their habitat, man experiences a feeling of deprivation. Right from birth he lives in a sense of deprivation and leaves the world in this very state of unfulfilment. The Quran explains this in the following words:

We have created man in the best of mould, then We cast him down as the lowest of the low, except for those who believe and do good works — theirs shall be an unending reward. What then after this, can make you deny the Last Judgement?
Is not God the greatest of the judges?

THE QURAN 95: 4-8

It is as though, God is addressing man saying 'O man, you are in this state because you failed to understand My creation plan. Had you discovered that I have prepared for you an unending reward, instead of giving in to despair, you would have paid your full attention towards making yourself a deserving candidate for this eternal reward.'

Humans are referred to as social beings or thinking beings. A more suitable reference would be to call them, Paradise-seeking beings. As perfection is only in Paradise, we can conclude that all the other living creatures find fulfilment in the pre-death period in their present habitat, but man will find this fulfilment in the post-death period in his eternal abode.

The pre-death period of life is like a temporary nursery and the post-death period is like a permanent garden.

If he were to discover this fact and engage himself in becoming a deserving candidate for the permanent abode of Paradise, then certainly he would attain peace of mind.

When one ponders over creation, one realises that it is perfect in all aspects. It is highly meaningful. The present phase of creation is the first phase of creation, and if the first phase is meaningful, then its second phase—the ending phase—must also be meaningful.

It is this aspect of creation that necessitates the belief that, if the beginning is good, then the end must also be good. If man's creation is in the 'best mould', then the final result of this should also be the best.

The Quran gives us an explanation to this aspect of creation. According to the Quran, man's life has two different periods: pre-death and post-death. The pre-death period is the period of preparation and the post-death period is the period for receiving the reward. In short, the pre-death period of life is like a temporary nursery and the post-death period is like a permanent garden. □

Great success

*The necessary price of great success
is long-time endeavour.*

LESSONS ETERNAL AND EPHEMERAL

Differentiate Between Them

THESE are two aspects to the struggle of the Indian independence movement under Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation. These two aspects have been exemplified in the independence movement by Gandhi as:

1. Civil Disobedience
2. Home Rule

The main ideology behind the Civil Disobedience movement was to defy the laws made by the British. It was the active, professed and non-violent refusal to obey the laws and commands of the British government in India. It was a message to the British rulers of India that, 'We will not accept your rule and your laws over us.' It was a demand to 'Quit India'. Another instance of the civil disobedience movement was the non-violent protest against the British-imposed salt tax that led to the famous Dandi Salt March.

'Civil Disobedience' was a temporary movement, whereas 'Home Rule' has a permanent significance.

The second feature of the independence movement under Gandhi was Home Rule, also called Self Rule or *Swaraj*. This meant self-governance and independence from foreign domination. It advocated the discarding of the British political, economic, bureaucratic, legal, military and educational institutions and laying a foundation for a democratic and independent India.

In his struggle for Indian independence, Gandhi had given Indians two campaigns, but their validity was not the same. Civil Disobedience was a temporary movement, whereas Home Rule has a permanent significance. There is absolutely no relevance for Civil Disobedience in India today.

This matter is not restricted only to the independence struggle under Mahatma Gandhi but is a natural outcome of every mission and every struggle. In every mission—whether it is a religious mission or a political one—there are certain issues that are temporary and others that are

permanent. In a similar manner, there are two such terms used in the Quran:

1. '*Jihad bil Quran*' — *Jihad* with the Quran
2. '*Qital*' also known as '*Jihad bil saif*' — *Jihad* as war

What is meant by *Jihad* with the Quran?

The Quran is a book which brings glad tidings to mankind along with divine admonition and stresses the importance of man's discovery of truth. The objective of the Quran is to make man aware of the creation plan of God. It makes a man serious about life, gives him high thinking that develops a God-oriented personality or divine personality in man. *Jihad* with the Quran means to take all these aspects of the Quran and make every effort to imbibe them in one's life and convey them to mankind so that not a single human being is unaware of them. This is true *Jihad* and only to make clear this meaning the following verse in the Quran was revealed, '*wa jahid hum bihi jihanadan kabeera*'. (strive with the utmost strenuousness by means of this — THE QURAN 25: 52) This kind of struggle is not just *Jihad* but according to the Quran it is the *Jihadan kabeera* or Greater *Jihad*.

What is meant by *Qital* or *Jihad bil saif*?

Another related term that is used in the Quran is '*qital*' which means war. In this connection, the Quran says: 'And fight—do war against—them until there is no more *fitna*.' (THE QURAN 8: 39) In this verse, *fitna* means religious persecution. The obvious and literal meaning of this verse proves that according to the Quran, *qital* is a temporary command. It was a directive only until religious persecution remained and as soon as it was put to an end, the command or directive itself was nullified. That is if it is eliminated then the command for war is also eliminated.

**God desired that the system of religious persecution
be eliminated and the natural system of religious
freedom be established.**

Due to the prevailing political philosophy of the earlier times, there was a culture of religious persecution all over the world. This philosophy and culture functioned against the creation plan of God as it was a withdrawal of the God-given freedom to man. God desired that this contrived system of religious persecution be eliminated and the natural

system of religious freedom be established. In order to achieve this end, God commanded the Prophet and his companions to remove this false system at any cost even if it required engaging in war.

The Prophet and his companions accomplished this command of God and at a limited level, religious persecution was exterminated. All the verses related to *qital* that appear in the Quran are in relation to the accomplishment of this mandate. In the present age with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights guaranteeing religious freedom to all, the validity of *qital* is now defunct.

**Now, man has complete freedom with regards to religion,
but people want to do battle for political
benefit and power.**

In order to better understand this matter, consider a tradition attributed to Abdullah ibn Umar, a companion of the Prophet (Fathul Bari, 8/60). After the fourth Caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib, when political conflict ensued between Abdullah ibn Zubayr and the Umayyads, Abdullah ibn Umar, stayed away from the battle.

People approached him and asked, 'Why are you are not taking part in this battle, although God has commanded in the Quran to fight them until there is no more *fitna*?' Abdullah ibn Umar replied, 'I have fought in battles until *fitna* was eliminated and the religion became God's. But you want to fight again so that it returns once more and religion becomes that of others besides God.' This incident is better known in history as the *fitna* of Abdullah ibn Zubayr.

It is clear from this tradition of Abdullah ibn Umar that the *fitna* that is mentioned in the Quran relating to this command was religious persecution. He said that they had fought in battles to eradicate religious persecution. Now, man has complete freedom with regards to religion, but people want to do battle for political benefit and power and in this way bring back the *fitna* in the form of political persecution! The war against *fitna* was a war of limited duration, temporary in nature and meant to be engaged in only until its specific purpose had been served.

In the Gandhian movement, although there were two terms that were used to identify the freedom struggles as explained above, everyone

knows that their relevance was not the same. In the same manner, *Jihad* and *Qital*, the two terms that are used in the Quran and elaborated above do not have the same relevance. In the Quran, the matter related to *Jihad bil Quran* has an eternal relevance whereas the verses related to *Qital* or *Jihad bil saif* cannot have any permanent significance. Their relevance was only a temporary one.

If this difference is not appreciated and one were to start a Civil Disobedience movement saying that it has a permanent relevance, such a person would be using Gandhi's name to spread dissension and disorder in the country. In the same manner, with religious freedom throughout the world, if one were to start a campaign for *Jihad bil saif* (*Qital*) saying it is a permanent commandment of God just as *Jihad bil Quran*, then such a person would only be using the name of Islamic reformation to spread disorder and dissension in society. All such movements would be totally un-Islamic and have nothing to do with Islamic teachings. □



No Risk, No Gain

*The present world is governed
on the principle of "no risk, no gain".*

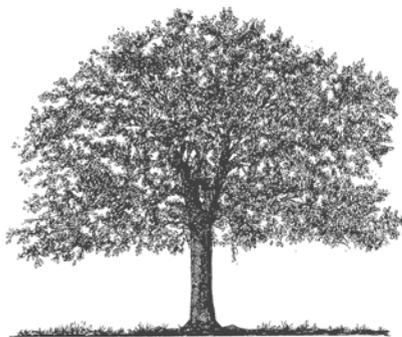
*It is, therefore, inevitable for people to
incur losses of different kinds.*

*At times, they are unfairly challenged by others,
they fall a prey to economic difficulties,
they suffer losses of land and wealth,
they meet with an accident or are
deprived of certain benefits
that should have been their's
by right, and so on.*

*These should be met
with patience and tolerance.*

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



SPIRITUALITY — A UNIVERSAL RELIGION

SPIRITUALITY is a universal religion. It can be divided into two phases. One phase is related to the pre-scientific era, the second phase is related to the post-scientific era. In my view, the spirituality of the pre-scientific era was of a lower level. It is only in the post scientific era that it has become possible to attain the spirituality of a higher level, just as it has happened with regards to other disciplines.

By applying the mind one discovers that here, non-material reality exists beyond material existence.

According to past notions, the heart came to be regarded as the centre and the storehouse of spirituality. That is why, man worked very hard for thousands of years to attain spirituality by focusing on the heart. For the same reason, the spiritual masters all over the world regarded the method of meditation as the only way to attain spirituality.

Heart-oriented spirituality remained in practice, meditation-based; achieved by suppressing the thinking process of the mind. But the strange outcome of this spiritual practice for over five thousand years

is that no spiritual master has been able to produce a truly creative work, unlike the mind-based disciplines which produced creative personalities. Besides, almost all the spiritual masters used the language of poetry or metaphor. In such a language it is not possible to produce any great spiritual literary work.

The secret of this failure of spirituality was revealed only after the emergence of science. Scientific research revealed for the first time that the heart was only an organ of blood circulation. It was not the centre of intellectual activity. It is the human mind which is the centre of intellectual activity. All the spiritual masters continued to seek spirituality in the heart. Whereas the truth was that the centre of spirituality existed in the mind.

According to my experience the truth is that spirituality—like other functions—is also a function of the mind. It is a phenomenon of intellectual development.

Spirituality is the highest intellectual achievement for a human being. But this achievement can only be made by developing the conscious mind.

By applying the mind one discovers that here, non-material reality exists beyond material existence. It is this discovery which is the beginning of spirituality. The more one realises this higher reality, the more one's spiritual level gets developed. In reality, like many other discoveries, spirituality is also a conscious discovery, far from comprising of vague type of feelings.

The spirituality centered on the heart is based on meditation, the culmination of which is ecstasy. Ecstasy suppresses the intellectual function of the mind. Feelings take hold of him, he is no longer guided by his conscious mind. Without doubt, ecstasy can act as a temporary tranquilliser.

Compared to this, spirituality based on the mind results in a conscious discovery which leads man to intellectual realization. There is nothing greater in this world than a thrilling experience at a conscious level. Even at its culmination, ecstasy cannot bring man beyond the confines of a limited world, whereas an intellectual realization takes man to the limitless world.

Another misgiving of heart-based spirituality was that an unscientific viewpoint became prevalent regarding the ideology of God. When the spiritualists focus their hearts in their meditations, after some time they start feeling that the boundaries have disappeared. They find it very thrilling; it is this feeling which is known as ecstasy. In this experience they find that they have reached a world where there is unity of existence; where the difference between the creator and the created has disappeared.

Spirituality centered on the heart is based on meditation, the culmination of which is ecstasy. Spirituality based on the mind results in a conscious discovery which leads man to intellectual realization.

This experience is not of the nature of an intellectual discovery; it is in actual fact a obscure feeling of a temporary nature. Still, on the basis of this obscure feeling it came to be believed that there was unity of existence at the higher level. This feeling resulted in that theological concept which is termed non-dualism—that God and man are the same in existence. Man is not separate from God, rather he is a part of God.

It is this concept which has been described by a Sufi (mystic) in these words: *anal haq*, that is, "I am the Truth." Without doubt, this concept is irrational for the simple reason that experience shows that man has no divine qualities. The truth is that man is the created, and not the Creator, or a part of the Creator.

According to my experience, that concept of God is rational which is called Monotheism in theology. It is based on the idea of dualism; that man and God have a separate existence. Both have totally separate identities. God is the Creator and man is the created.

There are two main sources of this spirituality. A perusal of nature and close affinity with God as a result of which one may start receiving inspiration from God. This is the real basis of spirituality. Without doubt, spirituality is the highest intellectual achievement for a human being. But this achievement can only be made by developing the conscious mind. □



THE WORLD HEREAFTER

Perfect and Eternal

SIR James Jeans once observed that the Creator of the universe must have possessed a mathematical mind. Here, I must add that the very meaningfulness of the universe is proof that its Creator must have had a deep sense of purpose. Such a purposeful Creator could not have created a world, which was imperfect—and therefore meaningless—if this objective was to be fulfilled.

Yet despite all its meaningfulness, our world in its present state is incomplete. It requires the existence of another world for its completion. It is such a world that all the prophets have called the world of the Hereafter.

This world of the Hereafter is not just a matter of dogma. It is an entirely scientific fact.

Scientific Proof

First of all, we must define what is scientific proof? According to modern science, scientific proof does not mean that there can be any degree of absolute certainty about whatever is to be proved. This kind of undeniable certainty is not possible.

The very meaningfulness of the universe is proof that its Creator must have had a deep sense of purpose.

According to the modern scientific stand, when we say that something has been scientifically proven, this statement only means that its probability has been established. In modern science, concepts that are presented as established facts are generally accepted only because their probability has been established, not because there is any definite knowledge of them acquired as a result of observing them. An example of this is the acceptance of the structure of the atom.

We can, with confidence, apply the same scientific method to our belief in the world of the Hereafter. Indeed, employing any other method would not, in principle, be appropriate. And, from the scientific viewpoint, we cannot refuse to apply it to the case of the world Hereafter—a method that we hold valid in most scientific matters. As we know, the steps to a scientific inquiry include —*hypothesis, observation and verification.*

If we apply this three-point formula to the world Hereafter, we can certainly arrive at an understanding of its probability. And as we know, probability is another word for certainty. Out of all God's creatures, man, who is unlike any of His other creatures—is the only one who has the greatest need for certainty, for he must know what lies ahead of him. No other created entity, whether animate or inanimate, possesses such a concept of 'tomorrow.' It is a well-acknowledged fact that the destination of all creatures, save man, is simply that of 'today', while man's destination pertains to 'tomorrow'.

Understanding the Hereafter

Those huge masses of ice, which we know as icebergs, found floating in the seas of the North and South poles, number amongst the most deceptive and, therefore, most dangerous phenomena to be found in nature. Their deceptiveness lies in the fact that no matter how huge, or wonderful in configuration, what we see of them amounts to only one tenth of their enormous bulk. What lies below the surface of the ocean, spreading far and beyond the visible perimeter, poses tremendous hazards to the unwary.

A purposeful Creator could not have created a world, which was imperfect—and therefore meaningless.

In some ways, our lives are like those floating mountains of ice. The part we spend in this world—about a hundred years, or less—is like the part of the iceberg which is visible above the surface. We can see it, touch it, feel it. We can measure it and deal with it effectively. But the part which comes after death is like the submerged part—vast, unfathomable and fraught with peril. It is something which defies the imagination, but which we must nevertheless try to comprehend, for that is the part of human life which God has decreed should be eternal and, as such, ineluctable.

We are all familiar with the facts of our origin and the course which life takes from the womb until death. But at the end of our life span, whether it terminates in youth or in old age, our familiarity with the nature of things comes to an end. It has been surmised that death means total and final annihilation. But this is not so. Death is simply a means of consigning us to a new womb, to the womb of the universe itself. From that point, we are ushered into another world: the Hereafter. While the present, physical world as we know it has a finite time-frame, the

Hereafter stretches away from us into infinity. We fondly imagine that there is some parallel between the pleasures and pains of this world and those of the next, but, in truth, nothing that we can experience in this world will ever match the extremes of agony and bliss of life after death. Those who merit punishment in the Hereafter will be condemned to suffer the most horrific pain for all time to come. But those who merit God's blessings in the Hereafter shall know the most wonderful joy and contentment.

Can we perceive the Hereafter?

It is because life in this world is intended to be a testing-ground that the world of the Hereafter remains beyond our reach. But all around us, we have innumerable signs which can help us, by analogy, to understand and appreciate the nature of the world to come. Imagine a room which ostensibly consists of four walls, furniture, a few material objects and some human occupants. To all outward appearances, that is what the room adds up to. But the moment we switch on the TV set, we are introduced to a hitherto unsuspected world of colour, movement, and highly vocal human activity. This world, with its scenery and very alive human beings had existed all along. It had only needed the flip of a switch to make us aware of it.

The destination of all creatures, save man, is simply that of 'today', while man's destination pertains to 'tomorrow'.

Similarly, our terrestrial existence is made up of a world within a world. The world we know is concrete, visible, audible and tangible. The 'other' world, the world within it, or rather, beyond it, is not however, one which can be comprehended through any of the normal human senses; no switch can be turned on to make us understand what it is really like. Only death can do this for us. And when we reopen our eyes after death we find that what had formerly been impalpable, and quite beyond human comprehension is now a stark, overwhelming reality. It is then that we grasp what had hitherto existed, but remained invisible.

Are we Accountable?

Once it is clear in our minds that the after-life truly exists, we realise that the sole aim of our earthly existence should be to strive for success in the life to come, for, unlike the present ephemeral world, the Hereafter is eternal and real. What we understand by suffering and

solace in this world cannot be compared with the suffering and solace of the Hereafter.

Many individuals lead immoral, even criminal existences because they feel that they are free to do as they please in this world. Freedom we do have, but it exists only so that God may distinguish between the good and the evil, and determine who deserves a place of honour and dignity in the Hereafter and who should be condemned to eternal disgrace.

The sole aim of our earthly existence should be to strive for success in the life to come.

While there is nothing to prevent the good and the evil from living cheek by jowl in this world, they will be separated in the Hereafter like the wheat from the chaff and will be judged according to their record in this life. Some will be condemned to an eternal Hell of pain and distress, while others will be blessed with eternal bliss and pleasure. Each will get his just desserts. □



Not a minute to spare

When a man has a specific and worthwhile goal before him, he sets a great value upon his time, but when bereft of a goal, time hangs heavily upon his hands.

It is then that ceremonial gatherings and vain pursuits become welcome occupations. He makes no real life for himself but depends upon others for occupation and distraction. In this way, he drifts along, like a ship without a rudder, to the end of his useless life.

On the surface, he has led a full, busy life; but, on closer inspection, he discovers, too late, that his achievements are nil, and that he has frittered away his precious existence in vain, meaningless diversions.

A RAY OF HOPE

In the Midst of Hopelessness

THE well-known American evangelist Billy Graham (b.1918) narrates one of his life's experiences. Once he received an urgent message from an American statesman who wanted to meet him at the earliest. On receiving this message, Billy Graham cancelled his appointments and immediately set out to meet this man. When he arrived at the statesman's palatial home, he was immediately taken to a room, where he and the statesman sat on chairs facing one another. Then, in a serious tone, the statesman said to Billy Graham:

You see, I am an old man. Life has lost all meaning. I am ready to take a fateful leap into the unknown. Young man, can you give me a ray of hope?

(The Secret of Happiness, Billy Graham, 1955)

This is not only the story of a statesman; rather it is the story of every man and woman. Every person, consciously or unconsciously, is obsessed with this thought. Man's average life expectancy is about 70 years. This is why every person, sometime or the other, thinks: What will be my life after seventy years? What will happen to me after death? What will happen to me when I leave this world and go to another unknown world?

Man should strive to his utmost to prepare himself for the next world, so that in the Hereafter he can achieve that which he could not in the present world.

On the death of his son, these same thoughts were expressed by the well-known singer Jagjit Singh (1941-2011) in these words: *Chitthi na koi sandesh, jane wo kaun sa desh jahan tum chale gaye. (You left no letter and no message. No one knows the world to which you have gone.)*

These lines do not only represent the feelings of a father at the death of his son, rather it is the case of every human being—if he is alive, then this is his feeling about himself and if he has died then these are the feelings of the relatives whom he has left behind.

Almost all thinkers of history were obsessed with trying to explain this phenomenon. Everyone tried to discover the answer to this question.

However, every answer failed to provide an explanation. In 1935 Alexis Carrel wrote a book *Man, The Unknown*. From another perspective the theme of this book was: *Destination, The Unknown*. Till today this destination has remained unknown and undiscovered.

Man's life is like an iceberg. Only a small tip of his life lies in the present world; the rest of it lies in the world Hereafter.

Having spent my entire life in trying to find an answer to this question led me to the discovery that the only rational answer has been given in the Quran. According to the Quranic explanation, man was born as an eternal creature. But, his life was divided into two parts: the pre-death period and the post-death period. Man's life is like an iceberg. Only a small tip of his life lies in the present world; the rest of it lies in the world Hereafter. Man should strive to his utmost to prepare himself for the next world, so that in the Hereafter he can achieve that which he could not in the present world. □

Find a detailed explanation of this discovery in 'Islam Rediscovered', Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, published 2001.



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REMEMBERING GOD

Conscious Acknowledgement

ONE of the commandments of the Quran is given in these words: "Believers, remember God with much remembrance." (33: 41) According to this Quranic verse believers must remember God very much, every day and every moment. This is the greatest teaching of the Quran, and it is the highest form of worship. One who does this will be blessed with the greatest reward from God Almighty.

What is meant by 'much remembrance' of God? Remembrance does not refer to the repetition of some words, but it is in the sense of thinking. Much remembrance, or *zikr-e-kathir*, is not a kind of lip service. It is rather a high kind of intellectual activity and a sign of God realization.

Remembering God much, is a result of a chain reaction in the thinking process; that is, a series of thoughts in which each thought causes the next one. *Zikr-e-kathir*, or much remembrance, is a result of creative thinking.

It is a product of a prepared mind. If you possess a prepared mind, then your mind is bound to get activated at every experience or observation. You will start discovering one aspect of God-realization after another. In this way a chain reaction will be initiated in your mind.

Zikr or remembrance does not refer to the repetition of some words, but it is in the sense of thinking.

It is this intellectual activity that is called *zikr-e-kathir* in the Quran. For example, if it is raining, a believer will very soon present his *shukr*, that is, acknowledgment to God. Then he will start thinking further: what caused this downpour? He will discover the natural processes that resulted in rain. He will then think that when the water was in the ocean, it was salty, but when it took the form of downpour, it turned into fresh water.

So step by step, he will discover how God created various processes which finally provided him water to drink. This is an example of chain reaction in thinking, and through this chain reaction, one by one, you start discovering aspects for realization of God. If you are a prepared mind, then this process will continue without limit.

This chain reaction of *zikr* will enhance your *ma'arifat*, that is, realization. It will improve your relationship with God, increasing your wisdom and power of analysis.

Remembering God much, is a result of a chain reaction in the thinking process; that is, a series of thoughts in which each thought causes the next one.

According to the Quran, believers are given a unique blessing, that is, they are able to add faith to their faith (THE QURAN 48: 4). This is not a mysterious phenomenon; it is a direct result of the above kind of chain reaction. This chain reaction of *zikr* is very important for personality development. A believer increases his divine spirituality through this process. □



The Spiritual and the Physical

*Man has been created by God
with two opposing yet complementary
qualities: the spiritual and the physical.*

*On the one hand is his mind, in respect of which
he finds himself limitless. He can think anything he
wishes; there are simply no boundaries to his thinking.*

*Yet, in his physical existence, man is extremely limited.
He is bound by innumerable kinds of constraints. The
greatest limiting factor which man faces is death.*

*Death nullifies all greatness in man.
This is man's severest test.*

*In all his apparent greatness, he must acknowledge
how humble is his condition. Passing from a limitless to
a limited environment he must acknowledge the confines
within which he lives. He must accept restrictions
in an atmosphere of freedom.*

LIVING AS AN UNDERDEVELOPED PERSONALITY

Impoverished Retirement

ON November 12, 2014, All-India Radio broadcast an interview with a well-known actor. The interviewer put this question to the actor: “You are totally different on the sets from what you are in real life. How do you succeed in performing a role which is different from your actual personality?” The actor replied: “When we perform for the screen, we detach ourselves totally from our real personality and cast ourselves in the mould of the character we have to play.”

This is an age of professionalism. In every profession, one has to perform one’s role under some ‘director’. While performing this role, a person detaches himself from his original personality for a temporary role. But, there is a problem. This relationship is not for life. A time comes when man has to retire from his profession.

A new situation awaits him after retirement. Having assumed the role of another personality in his professional life, he returns to his original self in his retired life. The original personality however has remained in an underdeveloped state. The person now has to face the life ahead with this underdeveloped self.

Furthermore, the post-retirement period is the most precious period of one’s life as it is the age of maturity. A comparison between the two periods of the person’s life results in despair. In the pre-retirement period he was acclaimed as a super-performer. However, in the post-retirement period he is reduced almost to a non-performer. This explains why almost all the so-called successful persons, in the second phase of their lives, live and die in despair.

What is the solution to this problem? People have only one of two options. The first is to choose a self-discovered profession—a profession that may last lifelong, in which they may achieve what is called job satisfaction. The second option is to start a new life immediately after retirement—a life of their own choice. They should spend time on study and healthy activities, and try to realize their potential.

The second option, although, is not an alternative. But when the first and best is not available, then the second best is the only choice for a wise person. □

THE HONEY BEE CULTURE

Ignore the Thorns, Extract the Nectar

IT is the honey bee's culture to travel every day and reach places where flowers are available for it. The bee extracts nectar from the flower and returns to its abode. It does not care about anything else.

Where there are flowers, there are also other things like thorns; but the honey bee simply ignores the presence of thorns and does not waste its time complaining about them. It simply extracts the nectar from the flower and returns.

This behaviour of the honey bee is a symbolic lesson to man—'Live like a honey bee'. Extract what is good for you and leave what is unwanted. Do not waste your time in complaints and protests.

Where there are flowers, there are also other things like thorns; but the honey bee simply ignores the presence of thorns and does not waste its time complaining.

People are generally offended upon hearing criticism against them. This behaviour is quite against the scheme of nature. In doing so, they pay a heavy price. They deprive themselves of the 'nectar' that is available for them in everything and every experience—i.e. a good lesson, wisdom and sound advice. Every person's environment has this 'nectar'. Man should develop the ability to take the 'nectar' and ignore what is not 'nectar'.

Living with a focussed mind is very important for every man and woman. Only a focussed mind is a developed mind. When you get offended or provoked, it means you have allowed another person to disrupt your focus and break your concentration.

According to the Creation Plan of God, every human being is like a flower. Everyone has a content of 'nectar' or a good experience to share. The only condition to extract this universal nectar is that when you meet someone, you should neither be offended nor provoked. You should adopt the culture of the honey bee. It is only this learning process that will make a successful personality. □

IN SEARCH OF MEANING

Discover Your Creator

THE Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist Viktor Emil Frankl (1905–1997) authored a book in 1946, called *Man's Search for Meaning*. Many authors over the years have written books with similar titles. During more than three hundred years of the printing press, billions of books have been published in different languages and if a common title were to be given to all these books, it would, without doubt, be: *In Search of Meaning*.

Everyone is in search of God. It is God who gives meaning to all phenomena, because, after finding God, everything falls into place.

A human being, by nature, is a seeker of meaning. Everyone is born with an enquiring mind. Everyone tries to find the answer to his quest; and, it is this quest which has resulted in the publication of many books, both fiction and non-fiction. All are directly or indirectly related to the subject of the quest for truth.

When a person reaches the age of maturity, his first concern is earning his livelihood. He opts for various kinds of jobs or engages in different types of economic activity. When he becomes engaged in some work, he goes through the period of satisfaction. Then, gradually, a time comes when he realises that his job is not giving him what he had been in search of. Certainly, he gets his "bread", but, as Jesus Christ rightly said: "Man does not live by bread alone" (Matthew 4: 4).

To earn one's "bread" is everyone's first need. But, bread can satisfy only one's physical requirements; it fails to give any intellectual satisfaction. This is the main cause of frustration and despair experienced by almost everyone today.

According to the Big Bang theory, the universe came into existence about 13 billion years ago. Everyone thinks on these lines: 'Billions of years ago, I was a non-existent entity in this vast Universe. Then, I was born and nature made me a part of the population of the world.' Every person, consciously or unconsciously, yearns to know how he came into existence and tries to find the meaning of his life in this world.

There are few who have not frequently reflected on existence. When a person is born, he immediately finds himself in a world with a life support system which he did not bring into existence. He then thinks that nature potentially had an entire technology hidden in it. Man later discovered and developed this technology to create the civilization we see around us. Thus, man questions himself: Who is behind this living drama? What is the relationship between me and that super-artist? Then, there is the question of death: Why does man die and what lies in the post-death period?

It is only the self-discovered God that can give you conviction. It is your own study and contemplation that can give you your God.

If you try to explain this phenomenon, you will find a single title for it, which in religious terms may be called "God". If we accept this term, we can say that, in fact, everyone is in search of God. It is God who gives meaning to all phenomena, because, after finding God, everything falls into place. Separated from his mother in a crowd, a little boy was running around anxiously. He was crying and continually saying: "Where is my mother?" When he found his mother, she took him in her arms. Instantly the boy stopped crying and became calm and satisfied. This incident illustrates the case of man. Everyone, knowingly or unknowingly, is in search of God. During this search he runs towards various things, but when they come within his reach, he very soon realises that he has not found the answer to his search. This has been true of every human being throughout the history of mankind.

'God' is not something which one finds from external sources: it is a matter of self-discovery. God can only be discovered by an individual himself. It is only the self-discovered God that can give you conviction. If you want to make your life meaningful, you have to take up this question on a priority basis. It is your own study and contemplation that can give you your God. The criterion of finding God is that when you find Him, you should become completely satisfied, like the little boy in the incident related above.

The process of search has only one condition to it, and that is, sincerity. Jesus Christ has said: "He that seeketh findeth" (Matthew 7: 8). This is not a religious saying; rather it describes a law of nature. One who is truly sincere in his search will certainly reach his goal. □

EMERGENCE OF A NEW INDIA

Peace and Spirituality

THE second half of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of a new India. Some historical factors initiated a new process in India. Now, in the twenty-first century this process has reached its near culmination. In a single word it can be called 'democratization of India'. Democracy results in de-monopolization of opportunities. This fact is evident in modern India. It is a positive sign for Indian society. Every section of society benefits from this revolution. This situation gives our country a unique position on the world map.

There are different factors that led to the initiation of this process. Some of these factors are political freedom, secular movements, modern education, industrialization of the economy and multinational culture. Also, several global factors are responsible for the shaping of this new India.

**Freedom with discipline is the greatest good while
freedom without discipline leads to anarchy.**

The film industry has also played a positive role in this regard. Bollywood provides a new place and subject of interaction for people from different communities and religious backgrounds who work together in harmony. This is a new form of socialization. In this way, the industry has also contributed to communal harmony and brotherhood.

Now we need an ideology that is based on peace, spirituality, positive thinking and value-based culture. All these developments in democratic India have provided a favourable base for this initiative.

It is high time for thinking people to awaken and play their role in this regard. This kind of society can be built through peaceful methods like the media, informal education as well as seminars and conferences.

Before August 15, 1947 India's struggle was directed towards political freedom. Now the most important question is how to use freedom in a healthy manner. It is a fact that freedom is the *summum bonum*. But, at the same time, it is also true that freedom requires discipline. Freedom with discipline is the greatest good while freedom without discipline leads to anarchy; and anarchy may nullify every good thing.

In the twenty-first century this is the greatest challenge before India. John Kenneth Galbraith (1908-2006) was a Canadian-American economist and diplomat. He served as the US Ambassador to India from 1961 to 1963. Galbraith once remarked that India was a functioning anarchy (*Rival Economic Theories in India, Foreign Affairs*, July 1958). Many other people have also made such statements about India. It is our duty to dispel this notion.

**It is the duty of the opinion-makers to make India
a true democracy and a spiritual society.**

Our leaders often claim that India is the largest democracy. This claim, however, is in terms of quantity. We have to make it qualitative. It is quality that matters, and not simply quantity. In terms of quantity, democracy is just a crowd. Conversely, in terms of quality, democracy is the greatest social boon. It is the duty of the opinion-makers to make India a true democracy and a spiritual society. Present India gives us enormous opportunities, but to avail these opportunities towards a healthy end is our own task. □



Leave the Conflict

The policy of avoidance does not mean cowardice. It simply means refraining from wasting time and energy in a futile conflict.

An advertisement for 'Spirit of Islam Online'. On the left, a laptop is shown with its screen displaying an article titled 'THE GREATER JIHAD'. The article text is partially visible, starting with 'ISLAM, in addition, a comprehensive system...'. To the right of the laptop, the text 'NOW ACCESS SPIRIT OF ISLAM ONLINE' is displayed in a large, white, serif font. Below this text is a hand cursor icon pointing upwards. At the bottom right, the website address 'www.spiritofislam.co.in' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The entire advertisement is set against a dark, gradient background.

SIMPLE LIVING, HIGH THINKING

A Conscious Effort

A *Hadith* tells us that 'Simplicity is a part of faith'. On a close examination of this *Hadith*, one can question the wisdom behind considering simplicity as a part of faith itself; that is a part of the belief in God. Let us first consider, what is the absence of simplicity? Absence of simplicity is the complex methods requiring greater resources, time and effort that we adopt in conducting our daily lives to satiate our superficial pursuits. Such complex methods require the use of our intellectual faculties only for material benefit, while they could have been rightly used instead in the pursuit of knowledge, personality development, spiritual growth and the promotion of global peace.

If we adopt simplicity in our lives, then we will save ourselves from many distractions.

Man is considered the 'crown of creation' by virtue of being endowed with the power of thinking. This blessing of God can be used either for the most mundane things or for the higher things of life. It does not befit us to use this blessing for the sole achievement of our worldly or material needs which in any case will be fulfilled with lesser effort. However, this is possible only when one makes a conscious endeavour to keep life simple. For instance, one meal on any given day could be an elaborate affair spread over several hours requiring a lot of effort and preparation or it could be a simple event, both ultimately serving the same purpose.

If we do not consciously take the decision to live life in a simple way, things will get complicated and we will create a web of frivolous goals that will ensnare us in the bonds of materialism. Our focus will shift from a God-oriented life to a materialistic existence.

The Prophet had predicted that material wealth will be the cause of much evil amongst his followers. The only way of saving ourselves from such evil will be to adopt simplicity in everything. If we adopt simplicity in our lives, then we will save ourselves from many distractions. Only then will it be possible for us to use our faculties for higher thinking. High thinking is the result of simple living. This is the essential ingredient in our endeavour to seek the truth and increase our faith. □

THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures

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

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

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

By [the winds] that pluck out vehemently and those that blow gently, and by [the clouds] that swim serenely and by those that outstrip them suddenly, and by those who regulate events. On the Day when a violent convulsion will convulse [the world], to be followed by further [convulsions], hearts will be throbbing, while eyes will be downcast. They say, 'What? Shall we be brought back to life, even after we have turned into decayed bones?' And they say, 'That indeed would be a losing return.' But all it will take is a single blast, and behold! They will all come out in the open. 79: 1-14

Every year we experience periods of calm weather followed by gales bringing clouds and rainstorms. Soon it is clearly visible that where the land was desolate, a new world has sprung up. This event of nature indicates the possibility of the Hereafter.

This shows in symbolic fashion that the emergence of the Hereafter from the present world is just as possible as the emergence of lush green foliage from dry barren land.

Have you heard the story of Moses? His Lord called out to him by the sacred valley of Tuwa: [saying], 'Go to Pharaoh, he has exceeded all bounds, and say, "Will you reform yourself? Do you want me to guide you to your Lord, so that you should fear Him?"' Moses showed him the great sign, but he denied it and refused [the faith]. Then he quickly turned his back. And he summoned all his people, and proclaimed, 'I am your supreme Lord,' but God seized him and meted out to him the chastisement of both the next world and the present: surely there is in this a lesson for the God-fearing. 79: 15-26

The life of Pharaoh and other deniers of the truth like him provides proof of the fact that one who denies realities is ultimately punished for it. These historical examples are enough to teach man a lesson. But an instructive event is such only to one who has a prudent mentality, and who examines an action from the viewpoint of its end-result and not just in relation to its beginning.

[O Men!] Are you more difficult to create than the heaven which He has built, by raising its vault high and fashioning it flawlessly, and making its night dark and bringing forth its morning light, and the earth which He spread out, after that bringing forth from it its water and its pasture land, and making the mountains firm: [all this] as a means of sustenance for you and your animals? 79: 27-33

The magnificent phenomenon before us in the shape of the universe is so great that all other things are small in comparison to it. So, in the world when the occurrence of a big event is possible, why should the occurrence of a small event not be possible? There are already many factors in existence on a large scale which explain the Quran's declaration that man shall one day have to face resurrection.

When the great overwhelming event arrives, on the Day that man remembers what he strove for and Hell is there for all to see, anyone who has acted arrogantly and prefers the life of this world, will find himself in Hell; but one who fears to stand before his Lord and restrained himself from base desires, shall dwell in Paradise. They will ask you [Prophet] about the Hour, saying, 'When it will come to pass?' What have you to do with the mentioning of it? Your Lord alone knows when it will come; you are but a warner for those who fear it. On the Day when they see it, they will feel as if they had tarried in this world for only one evening or one morning. 79: 34-46

Man is between two domains. One is the present world, which is before him, and the second is the world of the Hereafter, which is hidden from view. The real test of man is that he should prefer the Hereafter to the present world. But this can be done only by one who has the courage to exercise control over the base desires of the self and not behave arrogantly. □



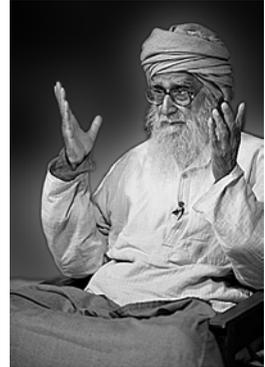
ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

Are there many Truths?

There is only one straight line from one point to another; so there can only be one path leading a person to God. This is the true path. The question is: what does truth consist of and how can it be found?

Fortunately for us, there are not several truths to choose from. There is only one truth for us to accept. This solitary truth consists of the teachings of Muhammad, the Prophet of God, on whom be peace and God's blessings. Anyone who earnestly seeks the truth will find that no exacting choices have to be made. The choice is between truth and falsehood; there are no two truths to choose from. (THE QURAN 10: 32)



For at least five thousand years, philosophers have searched in vain for truth. Their tedious investigations have only exposed their inability to provide conclusive answers. Philosophy seeks truth by means of rational contemplation, not realising that knowledge of the entire cosmos—something beyond the range of the limited human intellect—is a pre-requisite for genuine gnosis. The philosopher can never attain cosmic knowledge, so that even he cannot conceive of an accurate idea of reality.

Science has never claimed to be in a position to explain the truth. It only looks into matters, which can be repeatedly proved experimentally. Science discusses the chemistry of flowers, but not their fragrance, for the chemical parts of a flower can be analysed; its odour cannot. Science has itself restricted its scope, making it clear that it will deal only with partial truth and is in no position to expound on universal realities.

Some spiritual adepts claim, or their followers believe, that they know all about truth, and can communicate absolute information concerning it, but their belief is groundless. They claim to have reached the truth by means of spiritual disciplines. The so-called spiritual disciplines are in fact of a physical nature, and spiritual discovery by means of physical discipline is an unfeasible proposition in itself. Secondly, no

spiritual adept is free of the limitations to which all men are subject. The obstacles, which prevent others from reaching a full understanding of truth, also block his path. No self-discipline can enable man to transcend these natural limitations and convey to him knowledge of absolute truth.

So the stage is left to the Prophet. A prophet is a human being who asserts that God has chosen him and revealed true knowledge to him for the purpose of conveying it to others. Intrinsically, this is the only plausible claim so far, for only God, who is eternal and omniscient, can have actual knowledge of truth. God's divinity itself is proof of His all-pervading knowledge of reality. The claim of one who asserts that he has received knowledge of truth from God is worthy of consideration.

Here the question arises of there having been not just one prophet. There are many divine scriptures and many prophets have been sent to the world; which of them should be followed? A person who is really sincere in his search for truth, however, will have no trouble in finding the answer to this question. There is no doubt that in the past God has raised many individuals to the status of prophet-hood, but one can judge an event only by virtue of its historical credibility and only one prophet possesses credentials, which make his prophet-hood a historical certainty rather than just a belief. Of all those who have claimed prophet-hood, only Muhammad, on whom be peace and God's blessings, can be said to have achieved full historical credibility. Everything about him is established historical fact. We are just as well informed about the Prophet of Islam as we are about any contemporary person, or even more so. Apart from him, all prophets are legendary figures. No complete historical record of them exists, nor are the scriptures they left preserved in their original state. Only the life of Muhammad has been completely chronicled. The book, which was handed over to people, as the inspired word of God, is also present in its original form. So, looking at the matter rationally, there can only be one answer to the question. "What is truth?" From a practical as well as a theoretical point of view, we should accept the only realistic answer there is. We should not try to select a solution from a wide range of alternatives.

This truth is the word of God and the word of God is immutable. God's commandments never change, either with respect to man or the rest of creation. The terrestrial and celestial orders have not altered despite the passing of billions of years. The principles, which govern vegetation and water in one location, are equally applicable in another. That is the

way with God's commandments to man also: they are the same now as they were thousands of years ago. That which applies to one nation applies with equal force to all.

Some factors in life, such as transport or architecture, are continually being altered, but truth always remains the same. Truth is attached to that side of human nature, which never changes. The truth is concerned with matters like whom one should accept as one's Creator and Master; whom one should worship; whom one should love and whom one should fear; according to what criteria one should assess success and failure; what the purpose of one's existence is and the focal point of one's emotions; according to what code of conduct one should deal with people. Truth deals with matters, which are not affected by time and place. Everyone at all times and in all places, is confronted by these questions. Just as God is one and everlasting, so the truth is also one and will always remain so.

What should Man do when Confronted with Truth?

The verdict of hell or heaven for man is given on the basis of his reaction to the truth. When truth comes to a person supported by arguments, his mind testifies to God's truth having been laid clearly before him. Now he is left with no plea, no excuse that he had not been shown the right path. But, if even after being told the truth, he refutes it, then it is certain that his response is the result of arrogance. A superiority complex has come in the way of according the true place of pride to God while he accepts a lower position himself. Nothing awaits such a person in the next world except hell.

When a man refutes the truth, he does so on the basis of some feeling of confidence or the other. Sometimes this confidence is based on wealth and power, sometimes on honour and popularity. The material things provided to him for the purposes of trial come to be considered by him as dependable supports, and he feels sure that he will come to no harm as he stands on firm ground. But this is his greatest misconception. On the Day of Judgment, when these ephemeral supports have left him, it will become plain that he had rejected the truth all along due to haughtiness, using the many words at his disposal to justify his refusal of truth on false grounds of principle. □



Glossary

- Abdullah ibn Umar** (614-693); companion of the Prophet Muhammad; son of Umar bin al Khattab, the second Muslim Caliph.
- Abdullah ibn Zubayr** (624-692); companion of the Prophet Muhammad; first Muslim born in Madinah after the Hijrah.
- Albert Einstein** (1879-1955) German born theoretical physicist and philosopher of science; best known for his theory of relativity one of the pillars of modern physics
- Alexis Carrel** (1873-1944) French surgeon, biologist and intellectual well-known for his best selling book, *Man, the Unknown*.
- Ali bin Abi Talib** died 661 AD; cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad; the fourth Muslim Caliph.
- anal haq** Arabic for 'I am the Truth'.
- at-Tirmidhi** Sunan at-Tirmidhi; *Hadith* collection of Abu `Isa Muhammad ibn `Isa at-Tirmidhi, Persian Islamic scholar died 892 AD; one of the six major *Hadith* collections.
- batil** falsehood.
- Billy Graham** born 1918, American Christian evangelist and spiritual advisor to several American Presidents.
- Dandi Salt March** Salt Satyagraha, 1930; Campaign of tax resistance and non-violent protest against the British salt monopoly in colonial India. Took the form of a march led by Mahatma Gandhi from Sabarmati Ashram to the coastal village of Dandi.
- Fathul Bari** commentary of Sahih al-Bukhari written by Ibn Hajr Asqalani 1372-1449 AD.
- fitna** persecution.
- Hadith** sayings and deeds of the Prophet of Islam.
- Imam Al-Bukhari** (810-870); Islamic scholar who authored the *Hadith* collection known as *Sahih al-Bukhari* regarded as the most authentic collection of *Hadith*.
- Jagjit Singh** (1941-2011) Prominent Indian ghazal singer, songwriter and musician.
- James Clerk Maxwell** (1831-1879), Scottish mathematical physicist famous for his work on electromagnetism.
- James Jeans Sir** (1877-1946) English physicist, astronomer and mathematician.
- Kabah; Kaaba** the sacred house of God built originally by prophets Abraham and Ishmael in Makkah (present-day Mecca).
- Ma'arifah; ma'arifah** God-realization.
- Musnad; Musnad Ahmad** (780-855) a collection of *Hadith* reports by Islamic scholar Ahmad bin Hanbal.
- Sufi** a practitioner of Sufism.
- Sufism** a branch of Islam, defined by adherents as the inner, mystical dimension of Islam.
- Umar** also Umar Faruq, Umar Farooq or Omar bin al Khattab; died 644 AD; a close companion of the Prophet; the 2nd Muslim Caliph.
- Umayyad** Muslim Caliphate (661-750 AD) established after Prophet Muhammad; from the Banu Umayya clan of Makkah; founded by Muawiya ibn Abi Sufiyan.
- Ummah** religious community; followers of a prophet.
- zikh** remembrance (of God)
- zikh-e-kathir** much remembrance (of God).

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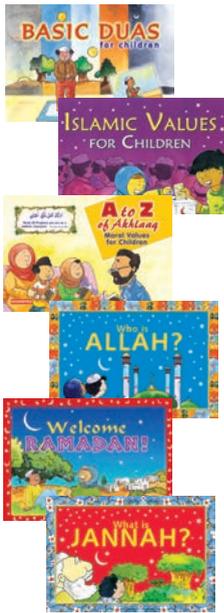
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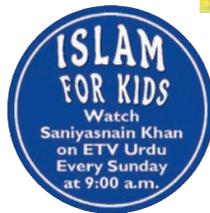
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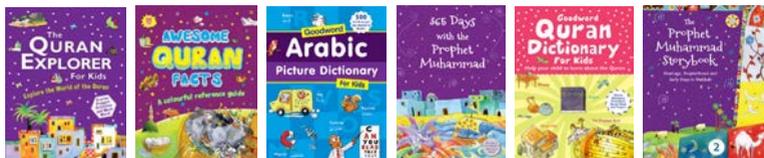


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