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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

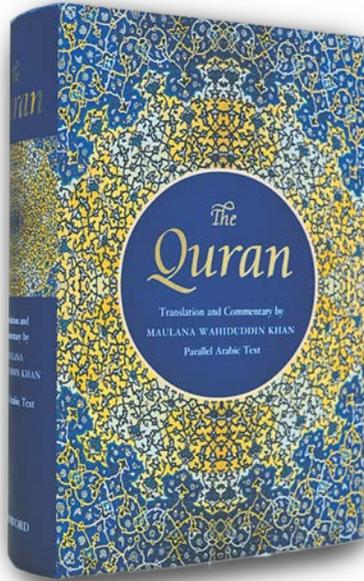


**Small, individual changes can indeed
bring big results.**

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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Towards Spiritual Living

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CHIEF EDITOR

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

DR. FARIDA KHANAM
NAGHMA SIDDIQI
AIJAZ AHMED

CONTRIBUTORS

MARIA KHAN
PROF. ZAHEERUDDIN

COVER ART

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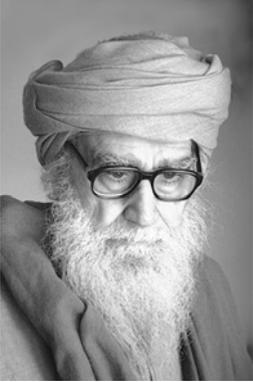
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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.

AVOID CONFRONTATION AT ALL COST

AN important principle of life is that if one plans to take a step against a group, first of all, one should think about the result that this action would yield. If one is in a position to achieve the desired result, then one should go ahead. However, if one is not in a position to attain the required result, then one must remain patient. That is, in such a situation it is important to adhere to the policy of unilateral adjustment. This principle has been mentioned in the Quran with reference to the Queen of Sheba. According to the verse she said: "Surely, when mighty kings invade a country, they despoil it and humiliate its noblest inhabitants—these men too will do the same" (THE QURAN 27: 34). This Quranic verse provides us with a principle about what to do if the other party is very strong and we are not in a position to achieve a favourable result by entering into conflict with it. We must avoid confrontation by all means, and opt for adjustment. Because, the other option will certainly not be result-oriented. There are ample examples in history that confirm the veracity of this principle.

It is a reality that confrontation, by its very nature, is blind. Confrontation does not know the language of justice. Consider a situation where there is disparity between us and another party, that is, the other party is strong while we are weak. In such circumstances if we begin confrontation, then we will have no right to complain that the other party is engaging in violation of human rights, because confrontation

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

does not differentiate between the innocent and the guilty. Once confrontation starts, it will lead to indiscriminate killing. Any hue and cry will be rendered utterly futile. Therefore, in such a situation the only option is to avoid confrontation at all cost.

Confrontation always leads to blindness. Where there is fighting, there is indiscriminate killing. Hence, we must avoid confrontation. But, if we do enter into confrontation, then it is useless to complain that the other party is targeting not only the guilty, but also those who are not blameworthy. The Quran gives this principle in these words: "And beware of an affliction that will not smite exclusively those among you who have done wrong" (THE QURAN 8: 25). This verse means that we should not initiate confrontation. And if we initiate conflict, then it will no longer be right to make protests saying that innocent people are being killed along with the culpable.

There is also a *Hadith* in this regard. The Prophet of Islam has said: "Evil is lying asleep. The curse of God is on one who awakens it" (Kanzul Ummal). This saying of the Prophet means that evil is always there in the world. If we want to save ourselves from the ill effects of evil, then we must try our utmost to avoid awakening it. The beginner is the one who is responsible for the aftermath.

Life is full of differences. The way of wisdom is to not let these differences reach the stage of confrontation. If differences reach confrontation, then it will necessarily lead to violence. And when violence erupts, it is always the party which is the weaker of the two that suffers. The option before the weak party is to not let difference turn into confrontation. Complaining afterwards will be of no avail as it will not help in achieving anything.

There is a basic principle that has been given in the Quran in these words: *As-sulh khair* (THE QURAN 4: 128). That is, "Reconciliation is the best." The opposite of this principle is: confrontation is the worst. If you want to save yourself from unwanted results, then adopt the policy of reconciliation. Once confrontation begins, complaints and protests will never work.

A policy of reconciliation always leads to the required result, and confrontation will always prove to be counterproductive. □

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

editor@thespiritofislam.org

TOLERANCE: THE PRICE OF PEACE

Unity In Spite of Differences

Requite evil with good...
THE QURAN 23: 96

THE year 1995 was proclaimed by the United Nations as the 'Year of Tolerance.' The statement of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (UNESCO) said:

"...the ability to be tolerant of the actions, beliefs and opinions of others is a major factor in promoting world peace. Amidst the resurgence of ethnic conflicts, discrimination against minorities and xenophobia directed against refugees and asylum-seekers, tolerance is the only way forward"

In its statement the U.N mentioned that racism and religious fanaticism in many countries had led to many forms of discrimination and the intimidation of those who held contrary views. Intolerance is both an ethnic and political problem. It is a rejection of the differences between individuals and between cultures. When intolerance becomes organized or institutionalized, it destroys democratic principles and poses a threat to world peace.

This proclamation of the U.N. in 1995 holds true even today. The prime need of the world today is indeed peace and tolerance.

**Roses can be had only by tolerating
the existence of thorns.**

One of the stark realities of life is that divergence of views does exist between man and man, and that it impinges at all levels. Be it at the level of a family or a society, a community or a country, differences are bound to exist everywhere. Now the question is how best unity can be forged or harmony brought about in the face of the human tendency to differ.

Some people hold that the removal of all differences is the *sine qua non* (prerequisite) for bringing about unity. But, this view is untenable, as it is not practicable. You may not like the thorns that essentially accompany roses, but it is not possible for you to pluck out all the thorns and destroy them completely. For, if you pluck out one, another

will grow in its place. Even if you run a bulldozer over all rosebushes, new plants will grow in their place and they will bear roses ineluctably accompanied by thorns. In the present scheme of things, roses can be had only by tolerating the existence of thorns. Similarly, a peaceful society can be created only by creating and fostering the spirit of tolerance towards diversity.

In this world, unity is achievable only by learning to unite in spite of differences, rather than insisting on unity without differences. For their total eradication is an impossibility. The secret of attaining peace in life is the tolerance of the disturbance of peace.

**Unity is achievable only by learning to unite in spite
of differences, rather than insisting on unity
without differences.**

There is nothing wrong in diversity of opinions. In fact, this is a positive quality that has many advantages. The beauty of the garden of life is enhanced if the flower of unity is accompanied by the thorn of diversity.

An advantage flowing from this attitude is that it builds character. If you are well-mannered towards those whose views are similar to yours, you may be said to exhibit a fairly good character. But, if you behave properly with those holding divergent views from you or who criticize you, then you deserve to be credited with having an excellent character.

In the same way, a society whose members hold identical views and never have any controversial discussions, will soon find itself in the doldrums. The intellectual development of the members of this society will be frozen, because personal evolution takes place only where there is interaction between divergent ways of thinking. So, where there is no such interaction, how can there be intellectual development? The adoption of a policy of tolerance in the face of controversy and opposition is not a negative step. It is undoubtedly a positive course of action.

The divergence of views plays an important role in the development of the human psyche. It is only after running the intellectual gauntlet that a developed personality emerges. If in a human society, this process ceases to operate, the development of character will come to a standstill.

Nobody in this world is perfect. If a man is endowed with some good qualities, he may be lacking in others. This is one of the reasons why differences crop up among people. But, for life as a whole, these differences are actually a great blessing: the good points of one man may compensate for the shortcomings of another, just as one set of talents in one man may complement a different set in another. If people could only learn to tolerate others' differences, their very forbearance would become a great enabling factor in collective human development.

The habit of tolerance prevents a man from wasting his time and talent on unnecessary friction. When negatively affected by another's unpalatable behaviour, your mental equilibrium is upset. But if you remain emotionally untouched by such behaviour, your mind will fully retain its equilibrium and, without wasting a single moment, you will continue to perform your work in the best possible manner. The policy of tolerance or forbearance enhances your efficacy, while intolerant behaviour reduces it.

**The secret of attaining peace in life is the tolerance
of the disturbance of the peace.**

Tolerance is not an act of compulsion. It is a positive principle of life, expressing the noble side of a person's character. The existence of tolerant human beings in a society is just like the blooming of flowers in a garden.

We cannot have anything in this world without paying for it. Everything has its price and this is particularly true of peace. If we want peace, we should be ready to pay for it or stand deprived of it. What is the price of peace? It is simply tolerance. We live in a world of differences, and these differences cannot be eliminated. Therefore, we have only two options before us: adopting the policy of either tolerance or intolerance. While the latter leads to violence, the former ensures peace. Where there is tolerance there is peace, and where there is intolerance, there is war and violence. There is only one universal formula of tolerance for peace, and this same formula may be successfully applied to one's family life and to social life, as well as at the international level.

Peace requires us to foster a culture of tolerance, for intolerance can lead only to war.

In the present world the root cause of most of our problems is traceable to our deviation from the peaceful model of nature—the best model for us to follow. All the dilemmas we face today arise because we have not followed nature’s lead.

The beauty of the garden of life is enhanced if the flower of unity is accompanied by the thorn of diversity.

The stars and planets are in continual motion in their orbits, but they never collide with one another. This serves to show man how to proceed to his destination in life without coming into conflict with others. The sun too is an excellent model. It shows us how we should give life to others in a totally indiscriminating way. The tree is also a shining example to man; it supplies healthy and beneficial oxygen in exchange for the harmful gas carbon dioxide. And just look at how the flowers spread fragrance all around, regardless of whether they are appreciated for it or not. A flowing stream is likewise a model when it irrigates the fields without expecting anything in return. Without the inculcation of these altruistic values among human beings, no meaningful life on earth is possible.

In short, positivity prevails throughout Nature. Negativity just does not exist in the natural world. This teaches us the lesson that we should give a positive response at all times, even in negative situations. Christ has exhorted us to follow Nature’s example in these divine words:

Our Father in Heaven! Hallowed be Your name, Your Kingdom come, Your Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.

Matthew 6: 10



Nature’s Silent Language

*Nature provides a pointer towards the future, everlasting world.
One who listens to its appeal, and moulds one’s life
accordingly, will be the truly successful
in this life, and in the Hereafter.*

NO, TO CURSING

Prophet: A Mercy To Mankind

IN the earlier Makkan period of the Prophet's life, Tufail bin Amr from the Dous tribe accepted Islam and then returned to his people. There he presented the message of Islam to his tribe and tried to make them understand but they rejected his guidance. Tufail bin Amr then returned to the Prophet and said, 'O Prophet of God, the tribe of Dous are engrossed in fun and frolic; so you pray for their damnation.' Instead, the Prophet prayed, 'O God, guide the tribe of Dous, and then he advised Tufail to return to his people and to be kind to them and wish them well. Tufail had requested the Prophet to pray for their damnation, instead the Prophet had prayed for their well-being.

Throughout his Makkan life, the Prophet never cursed or prayed for the damnation of anyone. There are many such instances in the Prophet's life where he prayed for the guidance and well-being of those who rejected his message and oppressed and harmed him and his followers.

Whenever he was asked by his companions to curse those that oppressed them, he advised the companions to remain steadfast and patient like those with the Prophets before him who were subjected to even greater oppression and harm. Instead of cursing his oppressors, the Prophet always prayed for their guidance and wished them well.

The matter of punishment to any wrongdoer belongs to God alone and is no concern of anyone else.

After the Prophet's migration to Madinah, there was an incident at the well of Mouna where seventy of the Prophet's companions were killed by some people belonging to three tribes near Madinah. This was a truly heinous murder committed without any provocation or reason. When the Prophet came to know about the matter, he was very saddened and prayed for the damnation of the murderers for one month until the Angel Gabriel appeared to the Prophet and told him that 'God has not sent you as the invoker of curses and damnation but as a mercy to mankind.'

Then these verses of the Quran were revealed to the Prophet:

You have no say in this affair to decide whether He will relent

towards them or He will punish them: they are wrongdoers. Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth belongs to God. He forgives whoever He pleases and punishes whoever He pleases. God is most forgiving and ever merciful.

THE QURAN 3: 128-129

There are several other *Hadith* regarding the revelation of these verses. Imam Bukhari has reported that the Prophet of Islam would take the names of certain unbelievers and would pray against them. At this, God revealed the above mentioned verses after which the Prophet stopped cursing and praying against anybody.

Imam Ahmad has reported another *Hadith* in this matter saying that, the Prophet of Islam would curse and pray for damnation against four men (amongst the unbelievers) after which God revealed this verse: 'You have no say in this matter...!' The report goes on to say that God granted these four men pardon and guided them to the truth. Then all these people sought forgiveness from God (and became believers).

'God has not sent me as the invoker of curses and damnation but as a mercy to mankind.'
Prophet Muhammad.

From this *Hadith* we learn that it is quite possible that God may guide those very people who we consider enemies and for whose damnation we pray. They may well reform themselves and come under the mercy of God. We also know that the Prophet of Islam had assumed that these people were enemies and had prayed for their damnation but when he was forbidden from praying against others, he stopped immediately and completely renounced the practice of cursing and praying for the damnation of others. Instead the Prophet continued the propagation of the divine message to them.

Those very people who were earlier the subject of his curses had become the object of the Prophet's divine message. The result of this change was that the one who was considered an enemy, being influenced by the Prophet's message, had now become a companion of the Prophet.

After this the Prophet refrained from cursing anyone ever again. In another *Hadith*, Abu Huraira reported, some people said to God's

Messenger: 'Invoke curse upon the unbelievers', whereupon he said: 'I have not been sent as the invoker of curses, but I have been sent as a mercy to mankind'.

In another *Hadith*, Imam Bukhari says that on the day of the Battle of Uhud, the Prophet was injured and he said, 'How will those people ever succeed if they harm their own Prophet even though he is inviting them towards their Lord.' At this point, the above verses were revealed again and the Prophet retracted his earlier statement.

According to the above verses of the Quran, and the interpretation of the related *Hadith*, it follows that even when faced by enemies on the battlefield, one is allowed to defend oneself but not allowed to curse or pray for their damnation. The matter of punishment to any wrongdoer belongs to God alone and is no concern of anyone else. To seek the damnation of others is entering into the domain of God. If others harm or oppress then the only option that one has is to continue giving the message of God to them.

A believer has been commanded to have patience in every situation. It is forbidden for him to hate anyone.

This is the desired character of a believer. A believer has been commanded to have patience in every situation. It is forbidden for him to hate anyone. Even if the others commit any oppression or wrong, the command is to tolerate and be patient to the extent of well-wishing and praying for the good of the opponents. These actions of a true believer will make him stronger and win over the hearts of his opponents and enemies.

There are two aspects with regard to the *Hadiths* related above: Praying for the damnation of others and Renouncing the practice of cursing.

Taking this example from the Prophet's life, Muslims all over the world curse their assumed enemies and oppressors although the *Hadith* teaches an opposite lesson. They have ignored this renunciation and instead taken to practicing the aspect mentioned in the first part of this matter by praying for the damnation of others. In doing so they are taking a grave risk, as the Quran says:

Do you believe in one part of the Book and deny another

part of it? Those of you who act thus shall be rewarded with disgrace in this world and with a severe punishment on the Day of Resurrection. God is never unaware of what you do.

THE QURAN 2: 85

To curse or pray for damnation of others is a relinquished practice of the Prophet whereas well-wishing and presenting the divine message of God is the Prophet's eternal *Sunnath* and practice.

To seek the damnation of others is entering into the domain of God.

Today the *ummah* of the Prophet is holding on to the relinquished practice of cursing and has neglected the eternal *Sunnath* of the Prophet. Presenting the message of God is not only an eternal practice of the Prophet but also a commandment of God directed originally to the Prophet and thereafter to his followers for all time to come. □



Admitting One's Faults

*Admitting one's faults and shortcomings is rare,
for it requires great courage. Without it,
we cannot make social progress.*

*Since every defeat is attributable to a gap
in the line of defence, the best remedy
is to accept it, for in so doing,
one is well on the way to
solving the problem.*

ADJUSTMENT—A GOLDEN PRINCIPLE

Save Yourself

WHAT is adjustment? Adjustment means living with a calm and balanced mind in an unwanted situation. Adjustment is a way of life. Adjustment appears to be a behaviour that you adopt towards someone else, but in fact it is for your own self.

The problem is that according to the creation plan of God, our world is a world of differences. Every human being is either Mr. Different or Ms. Different. Also, everyone has the freedom of choice to behave in whichever way they want. In such a situation, every human being is compelled to live in a jungle of differences. You cannot change this creation plan. Then, what is the right conduct or action in such circumstances?

The only realistic option for you is to adjust with other people. Here, adjustment means not to react, not to try to change others, not to become negative, not to take the situation as an obstacle, but to manage it smoothly.

Adjustment means living with a normal mind in an unwanted situation.

In every situation you have two options either to adjust with others or to opt for the principle of not adjusting. If you opt for the principle of non-adjustment, then it will only enhance your problems. You will live in tension, with a disturbed mind and will waste your time and energy. But, if you opt for adjustment, then you will be able to instantly free up your mind. You will be able to save yourself from all kinds of negativity.

Adjustment gives you a chance to continue your journey but the policy of non-adjustment is bound to halt your life's journey, either temporarily or in a permanent manner.

Adjustment is not a submissive attitude; rather it is an attitude of wisdom. It is the same principle which everyone follows when they are on the street. On the street, there is traffic coming from both sides. So, everyone opts for the keep-right or keep-left policy, in accordance with the traffic rules of their country. This is a way of adjustment on the roads. If you refuse to follow this traffic culture, you may well face a disastrous situation leading to harm or even death. Adjustment is

based on the natural rule: 'Save yourself'. When you are not in the position to change others, change yourself. It is this behaviour that is called adjustment.

Adjustment appears to be a behaviour that you adopt towards someone else, but in fact it is for your own self.

One of the teachings of the Quran is mentioned in these words: *As-sulh khair*, that is, "Reconciliation is best" (THE QURAN 4: 128). Reconciliation is only another name for adjustment. This Quranic verse refers to a law of nature, according to which, reconciliation is the best way of life. When you face any kind of difference with the other party, do not adopt the way of confrontation, but, adopt the way of adjustment. This is best for you in terms of the results. By adopting this principle, you will reach your goal without any delay. Be practical: do not waste your time and energy. Adopt the way of adjustment and ensure success. □



Great Works

*Those who are destined to perform great deeds
in life are those who do not seek any reward
for what they have done; the very fact
that they have done something is
sufficient reward for them.*

*The knowledge that they have played their part
is enough to make them content,
even more so than those who have
been abundantly rewarded
for their efforts.*

HUMAN TRAGEDY

Misuse of Freedom

The reality of life is sadly reflected in one of the sayings of the Jewish leader, Abba Eban (b. 1915):

Men and nations do the sensible thing only after
they have exhausted all other options.

(Liberty's Nation)

IT is true that no individual or group seems willing to act seriously or sensibly unless and until all irrational and superficial options have failed.

Our world is marred by injustice and dishonesty and all kinds of atrocities at both the individual as well as the communal level. This is because people feel free to do as they please, quite unfettered by moral considerations. The wrongdoers renounce such ways only when there is no other option. The freedom—which they abuse—has been given to mankind, because our world is a testing place. And on Doomsday, all without exception will be called to account for how they have used the freedom. If they have ignored and denied the truth in this world, they shall be obliged to accept it on the Day of Reckoning, because all of their options will have run out and subterfuge and pleas for mercy will be of no avail; by that time it will be too late either to beg for forgiveness or attempt to make amends.

**Freedom has been given to mankind, because
our world is a testing place.**

Why do people wait until they are forced to submit to the truth? If one accepts the truth because one is forced to, one's acceptance has no value. Why again do people wait until they are forced to treat others with justice? Being just to others because one is forced to is likewise an action bereft of honour or human kindness.

Why wait until we are on the brink of Doomsday before we act with human concern for individuals and a proper respect for society? Why wait until the Day of Judgement before we act—as bidden in the Quran—as honest, upright, responsible individuals? □

THE CULTURE OF PEACE — Part III

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.

Peaceful Ideological Propagation

The Quran relates:

Do not yield to those who deny the truth, but strive with the utmost strenuousness by means of this [Quran, to convey its message to them].

THE QURAN 25: 52

THE Quran is a book—an ideological book, not a sword. And so, to engage in *jihad* by means of the Quran, which this Quranic verse refers to, can only mean to convey the teachings of the Quran to others, to spread the message of the Quran among people in a peaceful way, to express the ideology of the Quran by providing adequate proofs so that people can accept them.

This Quranic verse clearly indicates that what is called as *jihad* in Islam is a peaceful struggle. It has nothing to do with violence. In Arabic, *jihad* refers to great effort, to strive to the maximum possible extent for a certain cause.

From this verse we learn that peaceful efforts are superior to violent efforts. When someone adopts violent methods, the scope of his efforts becomes limited. But if he adopts peaceful methods, this is expanded infinitely. On the path of violence, only a sword or gun may come in handy, while on the path of peace, every single thing, even a pen, becomes a useful means for achieving a higher purpose.

Changing Your Enemy Into Your Friend

Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend [...]

THE QURAN 41: 34

This Quranic verse tells us about one of Nature's secrets—that inside every human enemy there is a friend, and that we should discover this hidden potential friend. Once we do this, a veritable miracle will occur. The person who earlier appeared to us as our inveterate foe will turn into our close friend.

The fact is that enmity is not something natural or intrinsic. Rather, it is an artificial reaction. Whenever, for whatever reason, someone appears to become your enemy, you should not react in the same hostile way towards him. Rather, you must respond by trying to behave in a good, kindly way with him, even if you have to do this one-sidedly and despite the hostile behaviour of your imaginary foe.

**Unilateral good behaviour on your part will dampen
your opponent's negative emotions.**

This unilateral good behaviour on your part will dampen your opponent's negative emotions. It will kindle the flame of humanity that slumbers deep in his heart. It will make him a new person; or, in the Quran's words, your 'dearest friend'.

The truth is that every human being is born with a common nature. Our common human nature is what unites 'enemies' and 'friends'. This means that you share the same basic human nature as your imaginary enemy. That is why, despite your seeming enmity, you must search for this common humanity inside your imaginary enemy, too.

Hope from others what you hope from yourself.

A Result of Our Own Actions

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

THE QURAN 42: 30

This Quranic verse describes a fundamental fact—that this world is based on the principle of causality. As the cause is, so the result will be. This verse teaches us that whenever we face any misfortune, we should discover its cause inside our own selves, instead of searching for it outside ourselves.

If a person realizes this fundamental truth and remains deeply aware of it, he will never blame others for his woes and start inflicting violence

on them. Instead, the only thing that he will do is to engage in an unconditional survey of his own life. He will discover his own mistakes, so that by rectifying them he can save himself from further problems. To blame and attack others for one's own problems is like a sick man blaming his neighbour for his illness and then going about fighting with him.

Suppose in a certain town the traffic rules require you to keep to the right. Now, if you start driving on the left, you are bound to have an accident. Some car or the other is bound to bump into yours.

On the face of it, it would seem that this accident was caused by another car crashing into yours. But you certainly would not have the right to claim that it was not you, but rather, the driver of the other car, who was at fault, and that it was he who banged into your car and injured you. You will have to admit that the fault was yours—because you were driving on the wrong side of the road—and hence could not be the mistake of the other person, who was driving on the proper side.

Whenever we face any misfortune, we should discover its cause inside our own selves, and not start searching for it outside ourselves.

The same principle holds true in all aspects of our lives. Whenever you face any loss or misfortune in life, you ought to know in advance that whatever has transpired is because of your own wrongdoings. This is the right way to deal with life. If you think in this proper way, you will reform yourself and save your future. But if, on the contrary, you go about blaming others for your woes, you will only ruin your future. And, as for your past and your present—well, they have already been ruined!

Anger is a Weakness

The Quran (42: 37) refers to truthful people as those who 'forgive when they are angry'. This does not mean only to forgive and forget. Rather, it means rising above the psyche of anger and then behaving accordingly. It means thinking in a manner free from anger despite being driven to anger. It means to respond to a situation without being affected by anger.

Anger is a weakness, while not getting angry is a power in its own right.

If a person does not get angry, he can manage every situation. He can turn every matter in his favour. Anger destroys one's intelligence. An angry person can neither properly understand the situation he is confronted with, nor respond to it in an appropriate manner. He is immediately drawn to violence, though violence is not the solution to any problem at all. In contrast, a person who can keep his anger under control will search for a peaceful solution—and a peaceful solution is the only certain solution of every problem.

**Anger is a weakness, while not getting angry
is a power in its own right.**

A treasure trove of enormous capacities is hidden inside the human mind. If a person does not get angry, he is able to use these treasures that are contained in his mind in his own favour. But when a person gets angry, his mental balance is disturbed. In this way, he is unable to use this treasure trove of mental capacities.

To not get angry is a great victory, while getting angry is a great defeat.

Remaining Patiently Steadfast to the Truth

The Quran (103: 3) tells us about people who save themselves from loss. Such people, it relates, 'exhort one another to hold fast to the Truth' and 'exhort one another to steadfastness'.

Whenever someone is firmly established on the path of truth or invites others to the Truth, it always happens that many people become his opponents. He has to face considerable opposition. At this juncture, what he has to do is to adopt the method of patience. He must withstand the difficulties he is faced with, and not try to blame others for them.

Patience is another word for a non-aggressive method. This means that a person who is on the path of Truth must not respond to violence with counter-violence. He must unilaterally abide by peaceful means.

Truth and violence cannot go together. If you want to be faithful to the Truth, you have to leave violence aside. No matter on what pretext it is used for, violence is abhorrent, and all forms of violence are equally destructive. No seemingly wonderful or alluring excuse or pretext can save violence from its destructive consequences.

To engage in violence in the name of the Truth is itself a negation of the Truth. Those who engage in violence in the name of the Truth clearly indicate that they are not on the path of the Truth. A lover of the Truth can never be a lover of violence. Contrarily, a lover of violence most certainly is not a lover of Truth, even if he believes himself to be its champion.

The Price of Peace

Everything has a price. You can acquire a particular thing only when you are ready to pay for it. In this world, you simply cannot get what you want without paying its appropriate price. This is true of peace as well. Peace, too, has its price. An individual or group can obtain peace only when the price has been paid.

**In this world, you simply cannot get what you want
without paying its appropriate price.**

What is the price of peace? It is to tolerate loss. This fundamental truth is narrated in the Quran in the following words:

We shall certainly test you with fear and hunger, and loss of property, lives and crops. Give good news to those who endure with fortitude. Those who say, when afflicted with a calamity, 'We belong to God and to Him we shall return,' are the ones who will have blessings and mercy from their Lord: it is they who are on the right path!

THE QURAN 2: 155-57

This Quranic verse tells us about a basic fact of life. And that is that according to the law on the basis of which this world has been created, it is necessary for people to face different kinds of loss. Sometimes, they will face challenges from others. At other times, they may face economic problems or loss of power. Sometimes, they may become victims of some accident or the other. At other times, they may be denied certain benefits that they consider to be their right. And so on.

Every person undergoes such unpleasant experiences at some time or the other in her or his life. This is entirely in accordance with the Law of Nature. In such a situation, if people do not tolerate their losses, it will easily result in violence. But if they accept and tolerate their losses, it will enable them to live in peace.

To patiently face and tolerate loss is not tantamount to being defeated. Rather, this stance requires great courage and boldness. It is to voluntarily accept reality. It is to remain aware that even though one may have suffered some loss, one still has many resources left, on the basis of which one can rebuild one's life.

People who respond to loss with patience and courage can construct a new mansion on the ruins of the past.

By abiding by patience and tolerance in the face of loss, one saves oneself from losing one's balance. Despite being temporarily unsuccessful, one is able to preserve the ability to view things in a balanced way. One is able to survey matters realistically and make new life-plans. After getting past what one has lost, one is able to carry on with one's purpose in life on the basis of what one still has. One acts with wisdom, not hopelessness, and once again picks up one's life and journeys ahead.

In life, after every evening, a new morning dawns. This world is full of potentials and possibilities. Here, if you lose one opportunity, you can find another one. If you miss one step, another step leading to a new door, opens up to you. In this way, it always remains possible that if a certain plan fails, you can always make a new plan to carry on with the building up of your life.

The fact of the matter is that in this world, bad news always comes along with good news. Every accident silently gives us the good news that we must not be frustrated and bitter, and that, instead, mustering our courage, we should search for new opportunities. If we respond in this positive way, then Nature itself gives us the good news that our loss is not permanent. It tells us that we can very soon rebuild our lives—and in a better way than before. It conveys to us that very soon we will discover that what seems to be our defeat is actually a source of guidance for us.

People who refuse to tolerate loss fall prey to negative thinking and so make their lives into an enormous burden. In doing so, they themselves become a burden on others. On the other hand, people who respond to loss with patience and courage can construct a new mansion on the ruins of the past. They search for and discover a new dawn after a dark night, in the light of which they can carry on with their life's journey unimpeded.

Accepting Offers of Peace

The aggression of the Quraysh of Makkah had led to a state of war between them and the Muslims. Among the Quranic commandments that were revealed at this juncture was this one:

Then if they should be inclined to make peace, make peace with them, and put your trust in God. Surely, it is He who is All Hearing and All Knowing. Should they seek to deceive you, God is enough for you [...] THE QURAN 8: 61-62

From this Quranic verse we learn that according to Islam, peace is desirable to the maximum possible extent, so much so that if establishing peace entails a risk, then, too, it must be accepted. If in the course of war the opposing party makes an offer of reconciliation, it must be accepted without delay. Even if there is some doubt that this offer of reconciliation might involve some sort of hidden deception, reconciliation should still be made with the opposing party, based on the confidence that God is always with those who love peace, and not with those who engage in deception.

God is always with those who love peace.

From this we also learn that in this world the people who work to establish peace are always those who possess great courage. Here, in this world, people and groups will always have problems with each other. There will always be issues about rights being trampled upon and injustices being committed. In such a context, those people can establish peace who can rise above other considerations to focus on peace at all costs, and who will not accept any pretext for engaging in violence. Only such brave people can establish peace in the world. Those who lack this courage can only engage in constant conflict. They can do simply nothing as far as establishing peace is concerned. □

.....to be continued.

Part I & II of this article appeared in previous Issues No 19 (July 2014) & No 20 (August 2014).



MEANINGFUL UNIVERSE

Intelligent Design

SCIENCE is the study of nature. By nature is meant all those things that are to be found in the Universe. The study of Science began with basic observations in nature, but as it progressed it soon became obvious that these observations of nature demonstrated a greater purpose and meaning in the Universe. Any other understanding of the Universe that does not acknowledge its meaningfulness cannot measure up to the standards of scientific study.

For example through scientific study it has been established that there is intelligent design in the Universe. Now, if it is not accepted that the Universe has an 'intelligent designer' then this uniqueness of the Universe cannot be comprehended.

Discovery of meaning in the Universe is equivalent to the discovery of meaning and purpose in the Creator.

In the same manner, the study of science has shown that our Universe is a custom-made Universe. That is, it is perfectly suited to the demands of mankind. It appears to have been designed to support life. It is exceptionally favourable to the requirements of humanity to survive and flourish. Now, if we do not accept such a Creator who has established this consonance between the two different things—humanity and the Universe—then there can be no satisfactory explanation to this fact. In the same manner, in the different branches of scientific study, various different observations of nature in the universe show concordance and harmony between each other. There appears to be an extraordinary amount of fine tuning between them and this mind-boggling fact cannot be explained without acknowledging the Creator.

Science is not a religious subject. The discovery of the Creator is not its subject matter. The subject of Science is the discovery of the creation in the Universe. But the Creator is not separate from His creation. That is why the study of creation practically became the study of the Creator.

The things that scientific study has discovered have become the expression of God and these have been mentioned in the Quran as signs of God. In this respect, it would be right to say that the discovery of meaning in the Universe is equivalent to the discovery of meaning and purpose in the Creator. □

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE *SHARIAH* LAW

Re-engineering Individual Minds

IN present times, movements to impose *Shariah* law have been launched in different Muslim countries; for instance, in Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan, Pakistan, etc. In all these countries we find almost the same state of affairs. Muslims are divided into two groups—the rulers and the ruled. These two groups have gone on a collision course, resulting in great harm. It has ultimately proved impossible to impose the *Shariah* law, and these movements have only brought hatred, violence and coercion in their wake.

Why did these movements to impose Islamic law prove to be counter-productive? The reason is that everywhere the watchword was the enforcement of *Shariah* law, but the mistake made was that the example of the Prophet of Islam was not followed.

The enforcement of *Shariah* law begins in any society with intellectual purification, rather than with the practical enforcement of law.

The Prophet of Islam lived in this world for a period of 63 years of which 23 years were as a Prophet. During his prophethood a successful Islamic state was established. However in that period we do not find Muslims in Arabia dividing into two groups and fighting in the name of the enforcement of the *Shariah*, like the Muslims of today.

Light is thrown on the nature of this problem by a tradition of the Prophet narrated by Aisha, the Prophet's wife. She says: 'First of all, those verses were revealed in the Quran which deal with God and the Hereafter. It was only when people had come within the fold of Islam, and minds had been prepared, that the commands concerning what was lawful and unlawful were revealed. If the commands regarding the prohibition of wine and adultery had been revealed first, people would certainly have said, "We will never stop drinking wine and we will never stop committing adultery"' (Sahih Bukhari).

According to a tradition, everyone is born a child of nature. But then under the influence of the environment, he or she is gradually turned away from the natural state. This is known as perversion. The act of

forming a good society begins with the rectifying of this perversion—that is, bringing this state of perversion to an end and causing people to revert to their original state. This process of rectification may be categorized as de-conditioning.

According to the tradition narrated by Aisha, the way of the Prophet Muhammad was first to de-condition people and then bring them back to their original state. The successful completion of this process engenders in members of society the capacity to readily accept the concerned commandments. And it is only then that the task of enforcing *Shariah* law can be properly performed. According to the method of the Prophet of Islam, the enforcement of *Shariah* law begins in any society with intellectual purification of individuals, rather than with the practical enforcement of law.

The policy of Islam in all matters is based on result-oriented action.

Today there are 57 Muslim countries, in every one of which, Muslim leaders have launched a movement for the enforcement of the *Shariah*. But even after a long struggle, these movements have failed to achieve their goal. All they have succeeded in doing is create traditions of violence and coercion.

In this connection, Muslim countries can be divided in two groups. One group consists of those where violent confrontation is going on between the ruler and the ruled and the other consists of those where an oppressive coercive system has been put in place. These are the countries where the rulers have suppressed these movements and established their rule by the use of force. Obviously, both these situations are undesirable from the Islamic viewpoint.

Had the Muslims in question followed the method of the Prophet, they would have learnt that the right way of working was, for their leaders to begin their work from the non-political field. By imparting peaceful training, they would have changed the mind and character of the people. During this process they would have opted for the way of status-quoism regarding the political system of the country. They would have subordinated matters of politics and government to the democratic process. They would have given people the opportunity to elect their representatives by the peaceful democratic procedure of voting, thus giving them the opportunity to have their share in governance.

Had Muslim leaders opted for this two-fold wisdom, then certainly the conditions would gradually have changed. In these countries, first of all, a revolution in terms of thinking and character would have been brought about and then gradually politics and government too would have been revolutionized. But because of their blindness to prophetic wisdom, Muslim leaders have not only failed to achieve their objective, but they have also incurred great losses within Muslim society.

There are a number of traditions in the books of *Hadith* which have expressly commanded Muslims not to opt for a collision course with their rulers under any circumstances, however much perversion has set in amongst them. And if they think that something needs to be done to rectify matters, they should advise them of this in private. Such movements should never be aimed at confrontation with the rulers.

This policy of non-confrontation does not mean surrender. It means to remain strictly peaceful and continue to strive to educate people in non-political spheres. This allows time for decisions to be taken about what action is necessary, if any, when it has become evident that political perversion has taken place. Efforts to resolve the problem without resorting to confrontation should be continued till conditions improve to the extent that the desired change can be effected peacefully.

The policy of Islam in all matters is based on result-oriented action. If the result of an action is positive, only then should one go ahead, but if the result is likely to be counter-productive, then one had better opt for the way of peaceful reform, keeping oneself totally away from politics. With the adoption of this method, peace will necessarily prevail, while going against this method will inevitably result in war and violence. □

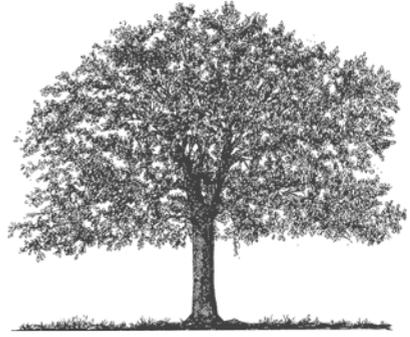


Restraint

*Always confine your activities to your own sphere;
if you infringe on the sphere of others,
you are sure to clash with them:
your progress will come to
an abrupt halt.*

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



A BELIEVER LIVES FOR GOD

A small infant owes everything to his parents. His life revolves around them. So a believer's life should revolve around God. God should dwell in his reflections. He should fear and love God alone. He should do everything for God's sake. He should put total trust in God, his Guardian and Protector.

Usually, people live for mundane things. That is why they never find contentment. They either live for personalities or for worldly splendours. Either their families mean everything to them, or else they have made prestige and wealth their ultimate goals in life. Some are obsessed with hatred. Some live to thwart, humiliate or ruin others.

A small infant owes everything to his parents. His life revolves around them. So a believer's life should revolve around God.

All these ways of living are based on false notions. They are placing total reliance on things which are ephemeral and out of place in God's cosmic order.

These things can never give man true peace of mind. They do not allow one to proceed along the divine path, which is the only road to salvation.

In this world all things live for God. If man believes himself to be an exception, he will eventually find himself helpless and on a false path.

A startling transformation takes place in a person who starts living for God. He finds silence more gratifying than speech. He is happier to obey than to rebel, to forgive than to hold grudges, he tries to hide others' faults. He is unassuming and self-effacing. He is not interested in occupying a privileged position. □



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LIMITATIONS OF FREEDOM

Use, not Abuse

THESE was a time when America was under the political rule of the Kingdom of Great Britain. After a violent struggle, America achieved freedom from British rule of 173 years. It was a time of great joy for the American people. It is said that an American citizen went out of his home to celebrate his newly-found freedom. He was walking on the street and swinging his hands in an unruly manner. Because of this ecstatic movement he hit the nose of a passerby. The passerby asked irritably: "What is this nonsense? Why did you hit my nose?" The American replied: "Today America is free and I am exercising my freedom." At this the passer-by remarked: "Yes, you are free. But your freedom ends where my nose begins."

This is an illustrative event. It gives us the right definition of freedom. Freedom is everyone's right, there is no doubt about it. But, freedom has some limits. Within its limits freedom is good, but without limitations freedom is reduced to anarchy.

The American psychologist B.F Skinner wrote a book in 1971 titled, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. When this book was published, B.F Skinner was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine's September 20, 1971 issue. The caption read: B.F Skinner says: "We Can't Afford Freedom." What it means is that we cannot afford unlimited freedom. This is because the phenomenon of unlimited freedom creates problems which may jeopardize development.

In the eighteenth century, the movement for freedom started in the United States and France, which then spread to the rest of the world. This movement had risen as a reaction to monarchy. At that time, freedom was regarded as *summum bonum*. However, this thinking was against the natural laws. Nature gives you freedom, but with certain limitations. Freedom is good but unlimited freedom is bad. The freedom movement had opened up a Pandora's Box. Now the greatest problem facing the modern age is how to close this Pandora's Box.

According to Islam, freedom is a God-given right to every human being. However, this right also comes with the responsibility of not abusing freedom. The proper use of freedom is the greatest good, but misuse of freedom is the greatest evil. □

WILLINGNESS TO CHANGE

Change Brings Opportunity

DR. Michael Hart has referred to Prophet Muhammed as the “supremely successful” person in history¹. Though this has been said, the Prophet’s personality was not that of a hero, but of a guide, which is why the Quran has mentioned the life of the Prophet as an example for mankind to follow. In this respect it will be right to say that the Prophet, in the example of his life, has given to the people of all times the secret of supreme success. On one hand, the Prophet was a supremely successful person and on the other, the life of the Prophet provides a supreme model for success in life. Here, below are presented two events from his life that we can emulate to achieve success in life.

Changing the Place of Activity

Amongst the *Sunnath* of the Prophet, there is one that can be called ‘Changing the Place of Activity’. In Makkah, the conditions for the Prophet had become very severe; so much so, the opponents of the Prophet had begun plotting to kill him. In such a situation, the Prophet did not adopt a method of hostility or aggression but instead left Makkah and migrated to Madinah. This policy of the Prophet is known as *Hijrath*.

The life of the Prophet provides a supreme model for success in life.

Hijrath is not simply a matter of forsaking one’s homeland; rather it was a strategic decision of the Prophet that can be termed as ‘Changing the Place of Activity’. When the Prophet found that Makkah was unfavourable for his work he made Madinah his place of activity so that he could continue his mission fruitfully.

From this example we get the principle of action that must be followed if in a certain place we are facing continuous obstacles in pursuing our work peacefully. The desired course of action is not to remain at the same place, while pursuing an escalating and disastrous conflict to death and destruction. Instead, the desire should be to search out an alternative and conducive atmosphere and location where one can continue one’s work progressively and in more peaceful conditions.

1. The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History, Dr. Michael H. Hart, first published in 1978

This decision on one hand will guarantee redemption where one's endeavours will continue unhindered; and, on the other, holds the potential that one can find a greater field of work with more opportunities than before. The *Hijrath* of the Prophet of Islam was a decision that held the promise of expansion and development. The *Hadith* also indicates this potential in the words: 'I have been instructed to migrate to a place which will consume other places' (Bukhari). Here, 'consuming other places' is used in the sense of expansion. The incident that the people of Makkah viewed as one where the Prophet escaped from his place was transformed by the Prophet into one that would unleash an expansion of his mission on an astounding scale.

Changing the Field of Activity

Another *Sunnath* of the Prophet is Islam could be termed as 'Changing the Field of Activity'. Although the Prophet of Islam had migrated from Makkah to Madinah, the leaders of the Quraysh in Makkah were still not reticent. They continued their aggression against the Prophet resulting in several battles between the two sides but these battles were inconclusive and there was nothing resolved.

After this the Prophet of Islam negotiated a treaty with the people of Makkah that is known as the Treaty of Hudaibiya. This was essentially a ten-year peace treaty between the two sides. Through this treaty, the Prophet of Islam had changed the field of conflict. Until now, the field of confrontation between the two sides was the battlefield where both the sides faced huge losses in spite of the promise of victory. After this peace treaty, the field of confrontation between the two sides was replaced by the ideological field.

Discussions and ideological exchanges began between the two sides. As a result of these peaceful exchanges, the ideology of Islam emerged as a natural outcome. Impressed by the message of the Prophet of Islam, people flocked towards him in large numbers and soon the number of the Prophet's companions swelled to about 125,000. According to the above examples, the true Islamic approach is: If the achievement of objectives by one method or mode is ineffective then it should be changed. Another more conducive mode should be formulated and efforts renewed towards the attainment of the goals. □



FAILURE IS NOT THE END

Beginning to Greater Success

A Great Future is Awaiting You

HAR Gobind Khorana (1922–2011) was an Indian-American biochemist. Dr. Khorana was born in Raipur in West Punjab. He earned his B.Sc. and M.Sc. from Punjab University, Lahore. In 1945, he went to Manchester University and obtained a PhD. Three years later when he returned to India in 1948, he applied for a post for lectureship in Delhi University, but was rejected. This incident made him dejected and he thought his future was bleak. However, he returned to England to carry out further research in his field. His hard work yielded fruitful results and later in 1968 he received the Nobel Prize for an important discovery relating to the DNA.

If you gain success, you become contented. However, if you experience failure, then it generates great motivation in you.

There are many such instances in history of someone being denied a job or position. But, after a long struggle they have emerged as super-achievers. These events tell us about a great secret of nature. That is, failure is greater than success. If you gain success, you become content. However, if you experience failure, then it generates great motivation in you. You start to struggle more than you normally do and such qualities are unfolded in you which do not appear under normal circumstances. This is the reason why failure works as a stepping stone for great success.

Failure is Not the Last Word in Life

BIDHAN Chandra Roy (1882–1962) was a highly respected physician and a renowned freedom fighter. After Independence he was elected the second Chief Minister of West Bengal and is often considered a great architect of West Bengal, because he founded five eminent cities in the state.

However, his early years were not very encouraging for him. After graduating from Calcutta, Bidhan sailed for England with only ₹ 1200, intending to enrol himself at St. Bartholomew's Hospital to further his education. The Dean, reluctant to accept a student from Asia, rejected

Bidhan's application. But Dr. Roy did not lose heart. Again and again he submitted his application until finally the Dean accepted him to the college after thirty admission requests.

There are many instances in history of such persons who experienced failure in their early years. But, they continued their struggle and finally became very successful. The amount of opportunities available is far more than the number of failures. In this state of affairs, no one needs to despair; rather one should carry on one's struggle in an unflinching ceaseless manner. Even after failing 'thirty times', one can emerge victorious.

Failure is Greater than Success

BILL Gates (b. 1955), the American business magnate who co-founded Microsoft is consistently ranked in the *Forbes* list of the world's wealthiest people. Gates once said:

I failed in some subjects in my examinations, but my friend passed in all. Now he is an engineer in Microsoft and I am the owner of Microsoft.

Why this difference between two persons? The reason is that success inculcated the thought in the mind of Gates' friend of having reached his destination. Therefore, his struggle ended there. He obtained a service and began to lead a normal life.

Bill Gates' failure, however, gave him a source of motivation. His failure motivated him to accomplish more and more to obtain what he had failed to achieve on the university campus. It was this psyche of Bill Gates that made him a hero and finally he emerged as a great name in business.

There are an abundance of such examples in history that tell us that those who faced failure in their initial years, emerged as super-achievers in their later years.

In life, success and failure are relative. The message of success is: you have achieved what you wanted to achieve. This kind of thought paralyses the mind. It leads to intellectual stagnation. It tells you that the time of hard work is over and now you can lead a comfortable life. On the other hand, the message of failure is different. It tells you that you have not yet reached the destination and you have to try again by exerting more effort and energy. ◻

MIRACLE OF LIVING TOGETHER

Human Bonding

THE month of *Ramazan* brought with it some positive news. According to media reports, more than 150 Hindu inmates of Tihar Jail of Delhi were keeping *roza*, the dawn-to-dusk fast during *Ramazan*, along with over 2,300 Muslim inmates. The holy month of *Ramazan* commenced on June 29 this year. Tihar Jail authorities said the Hindu inmates started keeping *rozās* along with the Muslim inmates from the very first day and have said they will continue the month-long fasting to its completion (*The Times of India*, July 7, 2014).

Behind this surprisingly wonderful event is a law of nature, which is invoked by living together. When people live together, there is bound to emerge automatically a natural process of bonding and understanding between each other. The above event is the culmination of this natural process.

When people live together, there is bound to emerge automatically a natural process of bonding and understanding between each other.

The present age is the age of interaction. It is a very positive phenomenon, but Muslim leaders have failed to understand the wisdom behind it. They have taken it as being dangerous for Muslims. They have adopted the policy of separatism in the name of preservation of Islamic identity. Under this obsession they have established a separate Muslim culture and separate Muslim state, institutions, and colleges. This policy culminated into its worst result, that is, the development of a ghetto mentality among Muslims.

Present Muslims are victims of this 'ghettoism' all over the world. This policy of separatism in the name of Islam is the main reason why Muslims are lagging behind in the process of development as compared to other communities in the modern age.

Muslim leaders place the blame for this lack of development on the so-called enemies of Islam. But, in fact the blame rests entirely with the Muslim leaders who have misled the Muslim community. □

THE PHILOSOPHIC CONCEPT OF GOD

In Search of Truth

ARYAN religions are based on the concept of Monism according to which God has no form. He is a formless God. He has no independent being. All visible phenomena in this world are reflections of this existence-less God. In actual fact, this is a philosophic concept. Generally speaking philosophers believe in a God in this sense using the words 'spirit' and 'idea' for God. This philosophic concept became a part of Aryan religions as a matter of faith.

The Universe displays extraordinary design; and design can only be the creation of an 'intelligent mind' rather than the creation of a formless spirit.

This existence-less concept of God is founded on a baseless speculation. In fact, it has no basis in logic and argument. As a primary argument, the created universe we experience, is a form in the full sense. It would be quite illogical to say that the God who is simply a spirit or an idea; who has no existence of His own was able to create a vast world full of all kinds of forms. God can only be one who has the power to create. And a spirit or an idea can have no such power to create. Therefore, prima facie, the notion of an existence-less God stands rejected.

The world as discovered by science is composed of atoms. Referring to this discovery, it is said that the study of science proves the oneness in the universe, that is, uniformity amidst exception in material things. But this argument is not right. There is certainly uniformity in the universe as regards its material elements. But the combination of these material elements displays extraordinary design; and design can only be the creation of an 'intelligent mind' rather than the creation of a formless spirit. □



Principle of Avoidance

For the human character to retain its superiority there must be staunch and unceasing adherence to the principle of avoidance.

PALESTINE: IDEAL OR PRACTICAL PEACE

Solution To The Gaza Conflict

THE Palestinian Arabs are a divided nation. They are living in three regions: West Bank, Gaza and Israel. The population of Arabs in these three regions is more or less the same. The Arabs are living in peace in the two areas of West Bank and Israel. All the violence we read about in news reports is related to the region called Gaza.

Why is there this difference? The reason is that the Arabs of the West Bank and Israel have accepted practical peace, while the Arabs of Gaza are trying to establish ideal peace. History shows that practical peace is achievable at any moment, whereas ideal peace always proves the veracity of the well-known saying: the ideal cannot be achieved.

Practical peace means peace based on the status quo. In every situation there is a status quo. If you accept this status quo, you can establish peace instantly. But, if you want to establish ideal peace, then it will amount to changing the status quo, which would necessarily lead to confrontation and fighting. The result of this fighting culture is chain war. The defeated party seeks revenge, and this sets off a series of battles, leading to revenge after revenge. When a situation of this sort takes shape, there is no end to it. This is exactly what is happening in Gaza.

Acceptance of reality is the key to success.

The Arabs of the West Bank and Israel have accepted the formula of practical peace, albeit under compulsion. However, the result of this has been positive and, for a long time now, they have been living in a state of normalcy in their respective areas. In contrast to this, the Arabs of Gaza are trying to establish ideal peace. What is happening in Gaza is the price of this unrealistic policy. According to the law of nature, there are only two options available: either accept practical peace and establish normalcy, or pursue ideal peace and face constant violence as its price.

Early Islam provides a historical example of this. The Prophet of Islam started his mission in 610 AD. At that time, the Arabs followed the

tribal culture, due to which there was constant conflict. Islam adopted the formula of unilateral peace, which proved effective and very soon there was peace in Arabia. When the Prophet started his mission, the Arabs turned hostile towards him. A state of war prevailed for about eighteen years between the Prophet and his opponents. After this period, the Prophet of Islam unilaterally accepted the conditions of the other party by signing the Hudaibiya Agreement.

This brought about peace between the two parties, thus throwing open the doors to all opportunities. It was by availing these opportunities that Islam easily spread throughout Arabia. This was the demonstration of practical peace.

The history of the Hudaibiya Agreement shows that unilateral peace is not a matter of losing, but rather a great gain. This is because it opens the door to opportunities, and opportunity is greater than everything else.

Accept practical peace and establish normalcy, or pursue ideal peace and face constant violence as its price.

In the present situation, there are examples of these two methods. The Arabs of the West Bank and Israel have accepted the formula of practical peace, so they are enjoying normalcy, whereas the Arabs of Gaza are trying to achieve ideal peace, and are consequently paying its price. This is in accordance with the law of nature. When it comes to the law of nature, you have no option other than to accept it.

The formula of “establishing peace on a unilateral basis” was never repeated in the later period of Muslim history. But, it was repeated under compulsion in the thirteenth century. When the Mongols destroyed the Abbasid Empire, the Muslims were so demoralized that they were not in a position to fight. So, they accepted the status quo and within less than fifty years history changed completely. About this event Philip Hitti has remarked: “The religion of Muslims conquered where their arms had failed.” Acceptance of reality is the key to success. □



THE GREATEST QUESTION

Find the Answer in the Creation Plan of God

MAN comes to this world equipped with an excellent mind and an excellent body. Therefore, the first thing one must think of is how he came into being. Then, the world in which he finds himself is an exceptionally favourable one for him to survive in. Here he finds an earth where he can live in comfort. There is the sun which continuously gives light and energy to him. Here is fertile soil in which all kinds of crops can grow. There is abundant water, which is essential for sustaining life. Here there is air which unceasingly provides him with oxygen to breathe.

This planet earth inhabited by man supports him in numerous ways. Here, there is a life-support system of a very high order. Without this, it could have been impossible for man to survive or make progress. It is a fact that man has been granted so many blessings that it is impossible to count them all. Only some of these blessings have been discovered by science. These too are so immense in number that even if someone studied them all his life, he would not be able to learn about all of them.

Man's own astonishing existence and the beautiful world around him compel him to ponder upon how all this came about.

This situation poses a great question which no man or woman can overlook. Man's own astonishing existence and the beautiful world around him compel him to ponder upon how all this came about.

We have to ask these questions: Who made me? Who has created this world? Who created this most meaningful life-support system and gave it to me? Everything in this world is a great blessing and everything is silently giving a call and inviting us to ponder over this matter and discover who the provider of all these blessings is.

There is another very grave matter linked to this question and that is the ephemerality of human existence. Man is born with the most precious faculties. He possesses a miraculous mind. He wishes to achieve limitless progress by making use of his extraordinary talents. Human life appears to have an eternal character but, within less than

a hundred years, while man is still on his life's journey, some unknown power intervenes and takes him away and sends him to another world.

Why this happens is an extremely serious question. And it certainly needs to be answered. Any man or woman who is serious about his life can never rest contented without knowing the answer to this question. It is only the right answer to this question that can give a proper explanation of the present life. Moreover, the answer to these questions will tell us what should be done to make life meaningful and successful in the real sense.

Everything in this world is a great blessing and is silently giving a call inviting us to ponder over this matter and discover who is the provider of all these blessings.

Such questions have been objects of reflection throughout human history. Many great minds have devoted themselves to finding answers to them. The answer which has satisfied the minds at a universal level is that there is a God of this world; He is its Creator, its Lord, sustaining the entire world with His almighty powers; and then that this world has been created under a special creation plan.

According to this plan, man is an eternal creature. But the Creator has divided human life into two parts, a small part of which is placed in the stage of life before death, while the major part is placed in the life after death. Death does not mark the end of life rather the entry into another world so that man may spend the rest of his life in eternal environs.

The Greatest Unawareness

The dead have left the world—this reality is known to everyone. But there is something of which many people are unaware, and that is that they too have to die one day. They too are going to face the same fate as that faced by others. It is strange that people see others die every day, yet they exempt themselves from these happenings. It is as if everyone is silently agreeing that others had to die and they have died, but that death is not going to come to me.

This lack of awareness is most fatal. This is that strange unawareness

or thinking which is known as 'Ostrich thinking'. Whether or not anyone thinks about death, death awaits him or her.

Death is like an earthquake at an individual level. The earthquake comes without any warning. Similarly, death too comes without prior announcement. Everyone is helpless in the face of an earthquake. Similarly, everyone is helpless in the face of death. Death comes all of a sudden. Like the earthquake it shatters the castle of man's illusions. Man may want to prevent the approach of death, but he will never succeed in doing so.

The Creator has divided human life into two parts, a small part of which is placed in the stage of life before death, while the major part is placed in the life after death.

Death is governed by its own laws and proceeds without man's consent. This situation demands that man should be extremely sensitive about death. He should feel every night that the next morning he may not see the light of day. Every night when he goes to bed, he should feel that his eyes may not open again in this world.

If man is thoroughly conscious of this fact he will be shaken to the core. Life for him will not mean living in the simple sense. It will rather be the herald of death. Fortunate are those who become aware of this sudden onslaught of death and make full preparation before death actually comes.

Death for Everyone

'Life has become for me a waiting period for death', said an old man. In reality, life is a waiting period for death for everyone although most people do not grasp this fact. The only difference between an old and a young man is that the reality which is accepted by the old man compulsively will be accepted by the young man only if he ponders over it. For an old man, death is a compulsive discovery. For a young man, it is a conscious discovery. A highly successful American businessman, on reaching 90, felt that he was no longer able to function either physically or mentally. Now the next stage that he was going to face was death.

One day he expressed his feelings to someone in these words:

I am going to take a fateful leap into the unknown.

This fate awaits everyone who is born into this world, whether he is weak or strong, rich or poor, white or black, literate or illiterate, powerless or powerful. The day is to come for everyone, when he will take the fateful leap towards death—even to the one who had been denying that there is a life after death.

The wise man is one who realizes this reality in advance. It is this reality which has been expressed in a tradition of the Prophet in these words:

The wise man is one who controls his desires and works for the life after death and the unwise man is one who follows his desires and pins all his hopes on God.

Strange Game, Strange Loss

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, the British government was at its zenith. In those times they built a new city (New Delhi) within the bounds of Delhi. It contained the Vice Regal Lodge, Parliament House, India Gate, huge official buildings, a network of broad avenues and beautiful parks, etc. This world of New Delhi in those days was so distinguished that it was regarded a 'political Taj Mahal.'

Death does not mark the end of life rather the entry into another world so that man may spend the rest of his life in eternal environs.

When this 'political Taj Mahal' was ready, it was visited by a French leader. He was very well read. He knew that the world had seen a democratic revolution and that, like other empires, the British Empire too was certainly going to come to an end one day. Therefore, he expressed himself in these words: "What a magnificent world they have built to leave." This is the story of everyone in this world, with the sole difference that some built small castles and others built big castles. The end of this magnificent 'political Taj Mahal' was that British rulers finally left it on August 15, 1947.

The same end awaits all men and women. Certainly the time is going to come for everyone when, all alone, they will have to leave this world leaving their castles behind them. This happening takes place before us each and every day. But no one learns anything from this. Everyone is living as if whatever has happened with others, will not happen to them.

Whether or not one expresses this in words, it is a fact that in this matter every man and woman has exempted himself or herself, although the reality is that no exemption will be made for any human being.

Old Age, Death

Man is born into this world as a baby, becomes an infant and then he reaches adolescence. He grows old and finally within a period of a hundred years he dies. It happens to all men and women—compulsory aging after adolescence and afterwards, compulsory death.

This is the story of every individual whether he be rich or poor, ruler or ruled. Man appears to be invested with powers. But in the matter of death he is totally powerless. Just as an earthquake comes all of a sudden governed by the unilateral laws of nature; similarly, death too comes from the Creator on a unilateral basis. Man has no say in this matter.

Fortunate are those who become aware of this sudden onslaught of death and make full preparation before death actually comes.

This state of affairs demands that man should remember death at every moment. He should be ready to die at any time. He should be engaged all the time in introspection as to what preparation he has done for the life after death, and what he has in store for his journey after death. People maintain a life's diary but what is more important is to write the diary of death. Everyone should record in his diary as to what he thought today about death. For instance, hearing of someone's death, should remind us of our own death. When we witness that person's last rites and see his body being lowered into the grave, it should remind us that one day we too would be buried in the same way.

One who sees his own death in the death of others is the truly living person. A living person does not wait to undergo a fatal experience and only then learn a lesson from it. The truly alive person is one who learns lessons from others' experiences. □



ALL CREDIT GOES TO GOD ALMIGHTY

Recognise and Acknowledge Him

IN the tennis Grand Slam final held at Wimbledon on July 6, 2014, Serbia's Novak Djokovic defeated Switzerland's Roger Federer. After his victory in the four-hour long match, Djokovic said: "He (Federer) is a magnificent champion, a magnificent role model. Thank you for letting me win today."

When someone achieves great success, he always gives credit for it to himself, his parents, friends or someone else. However, this is a totally wrong attribution. In fact, it is God Almighty who has created the successful person, and it is God alone who provided all the necessary infrastructure for the person to play his requisite role. All assistance and support supplied to him for his success was directly given to him by the Creator. Other than God no one has any power at all to bestow these favours upon a person. It is strange that every man and woman are so unaware of this fact and they fail to give the credit of all these blessing to their Creator. This is no doubt the greatest blunder of mankind.

**It is God Almighty who has created the successful person,
and it is God alone who provided all the necessary
infrastructure for the person to play
his requisite role.**

Any blessing or success that comes to a man or woman is a test for him or her. If a person gives the credit to the Creator, then he passes his test. But, if he gives the credit to someone other than the Creator he fails in the test.

However, this state of affairs will continue only until Doomsday. On Doomsday the veil will be lifted up from everything, and truth will become so obvious that the blind will also be able to recognize it. That day failures will have punishment awaiting for them and those who pass the test will be rewarded. This is the reason why the Quran refers to this day as the "Day of Loss and Gain" (THE QURAN 64: 9). □



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**

He sends down water from the sky that fills riverbeds to overflowing, each according to its measure. The torrent carries along swelling foam, akin to what rises from smelted ore from which man makes ornaments and tools. God thus depicts truth and falsehood. The scum is cast away, but whatever is of use to man remains behind. God thus speaks in parables. (13: 17)

God has created this world in such a way that here material events have become the symbols of moral realities. Whatever Almighty God expects from man at the level of consciousness is being demonstrated in the rest of the world at the material level. In the Quran two events of nature have been mentioned here. One is that when there is rainfall, its water flows and reaches rivers and streams. At that time a great deal of foam surfaces on it. In the same way when silver and other minerals are heated in order to clean them, their impurities appear in the shape of foam, but immediately thereafter the foam, which is useless for man, evaporates in space and the water and minerals which are useful for man remain intact.

These are the events of nature through which God shows symbolically what principles He has laid down for the success or failure of life. One principle is that, in this world, only that person has a place who proves useful to others. The individual who has lost his capacity to benefit others has no place in this world created by God. The same is true of communities and groups.

There will be the best of rewards for those who respond to their Lord: while those who do not respond to Him—if they possessed all that is on earth and twice as much, they would surely offer it as ransom

[on the Day of Judgement];—will have the worst reckoning and their goal is Hell: and how evil a resting-place! (13: 18)

It is the law of God in this world that dirt and foam may emerge and surface for some time, but finally what receives a place here is that which gives benefit. In the Hereafter also, the same is true of human beings. In the world some people may be prominent due to some skill but, in the Hereafter, only those who possess real qualities will receive a higher status.

People do not respond to the call for the Truth in this world because they always feel that, by advancing towards unadulterated Truth, they will lose worldly benefits. The rewards for ignoring the Truth which such people receive are invariably: honour, popularity and prosperity in this world. They appear to be occupying seats of high status by rejecting the Truth.

In the Hereafter, all these people will have been thrown out as like fast-disappearing foam. And only those people will figure as prominent who surrendered themselves to the Truth, ignoring temporary benefits.

People give so much importance to worldly status and worldly benefits that they ignore the truth. In the Hereafter these things will appear unimportant to them, so much so that they would want to give this whole world and one more world equal to it, to ransom themselves from divine punishment. □



Prophetic Guidance

*The Prophet of Islam once observed:
"The best among you is one who is best for his family."*

*This applies to all individuals,
be they men or women,
young or old.*

*The ideal way for any individual to prove his worth
is to become a modest member of his family.*

Glossary

Abba Eban (1915–2002) Israeli diplomat and politician and a scholar of Hebrew and Arabic languages.

Abu Hurairah a companion of the Prophet renowned for his memory of *Hadith*; died 681 AD.

Aisha (612–678); daughter of Abu Bakr, wife of Prophet Muhammad; one of the most intellectual and influential women in Islamic history.

as-sulh khair Arabic for 'reconciliation or settlement is best'.

Caesar imperial title adopted by the Roman Emperors.

Doomsday Day of Reckoning or Judgement.

Dous; Daws; one of the tribes of Arabia during Prophet Muhammad's times.

Gabriel one of the archangels whom God sent to the prophets with His divine message.

Hijrah also *Hijra*; the migration of prophet Muhammad and his followers from Makkah to Medina in 622 AD.

Hudaibiya place just outside Makkah where the Treaty of Hudaibiya was made between Muhammad representing the state of Medina and the Quraysh in 628 AD.

Imam Ahmad Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780–855); Islamic scholar and theologian; famous for *Hadith* collection known as *Musnad Ahmad*.

Jihad struggle in the way of God.

Kanzul Ummal *Hadith* collection by Islamic scholar Ali ibn Abd-al-Malik al-Hindi.

Khilafat-e-Rashida also Rashidun Caliphate or "Rightly Guided" caliphs (632–661 AD) is the

collective term comprising the first four caliphs in Islamic history (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali); founded after Prophet Muhammad's death in 632 AD.

Michael Hart Dr. Michael H. Hart (b. 1932); American astrophysicist and author.

Monism the philosophical view that a variety of existing things can be explained in terms of a single reality or substance.

Queen of Sheba monarch of the ancient kingdom of Sheba or Saba.

Quraysh the dominant tribe of Makkah during the time when Prophet Mohammad was born; genealogical ancestry traced to prophets Abraham and Ismael.

roza fasting; abstaining from food and drink from dawn to dusk.

ruku' bowing down.

Shariah moral code and religious law of Islam.

shura council for mutual consultation.

status quoism to keep things the way they presently are; from *status quo*, Latin term for 'existing state of affairs'.

summum bonum Latin expression meaning 'the highest good'.

Sunnah; Sunnath practice and teachings of Prophet Muhammad.

Tufail bin Amr Tufail bin Amr al-Dawsi (d 633); chief of Banu Daws tribe from Arabia in pre-Quranic times. He accepted Islam and was a companion of the Prophet Muhammad.

Ummah religious community; followers of a prophet.

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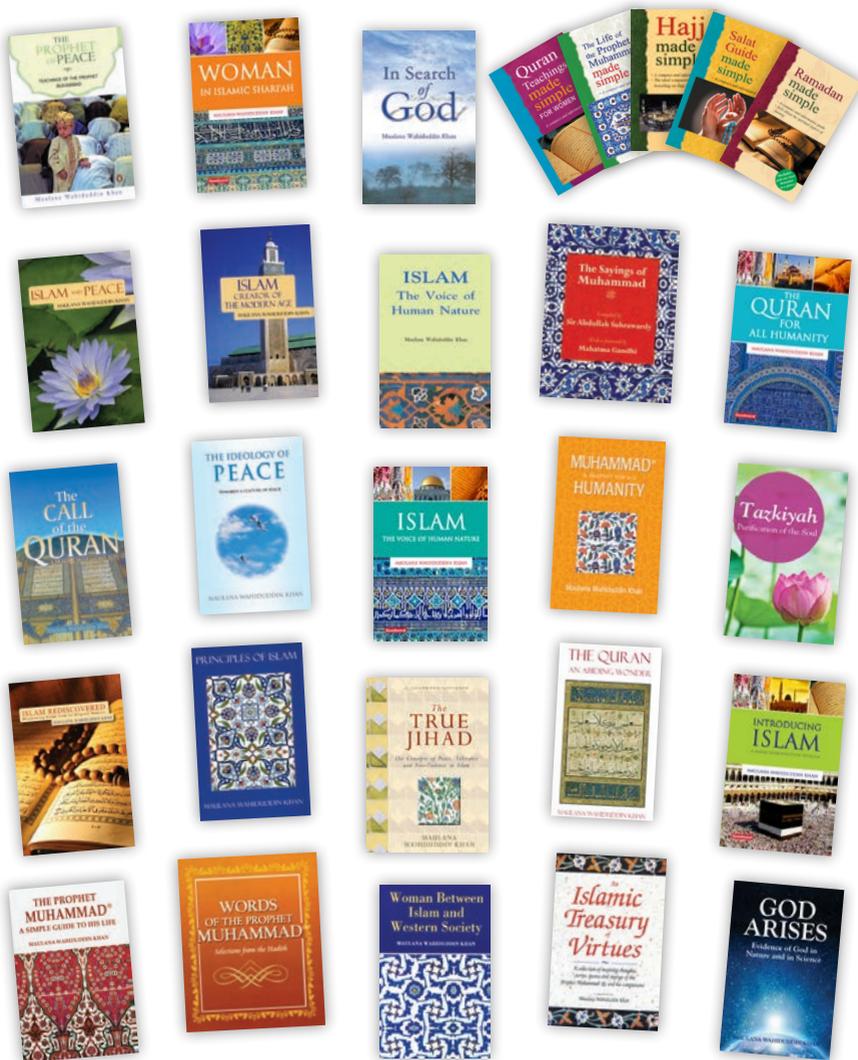
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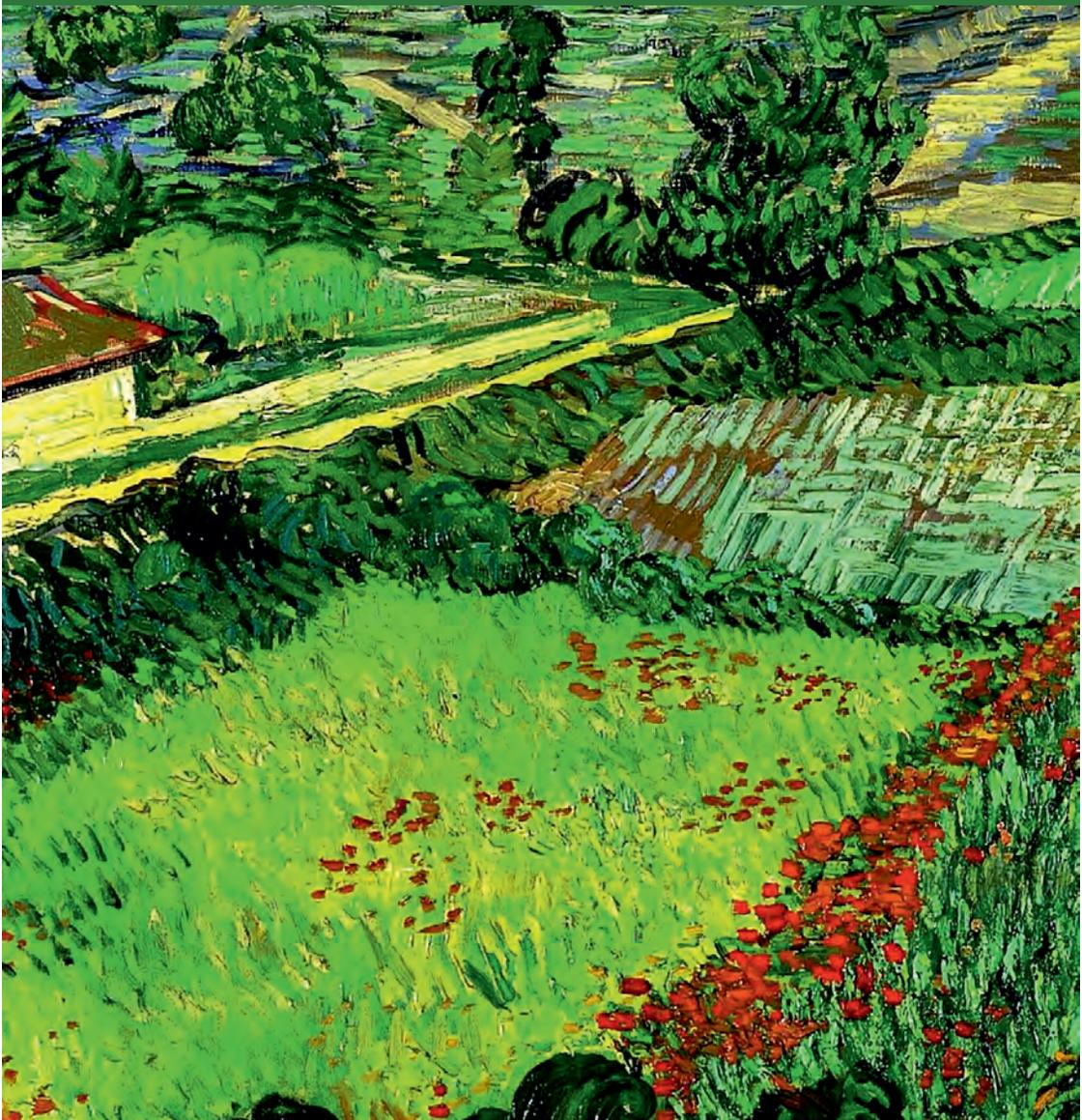
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