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SPIRIT OF ISLAM



Freedom of expression saves man from hypocrisy.

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Spiritual Living

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CONDEMNATION OF ATTACK ON CHARLIE HEBDO IN PARIS

On January 7, 2015 a brutal attack was carried out on the office of the French weekly magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, in Paris. This attack was evidently perpetrated by a Muslim group in retaliation for satirical cartoons on Prophet Muhammad first published in 2006. In this attack, twelve people, including ten journalists of the magazine, were killed. Later on January 11, 2015, a Hamburg daily that reprinted the cartoons was hit by arsonists.

After carrying out the killings, the attackers recited the words: "*Allahu Akbar*". This attack, however, has nothing to do with Islam. It is totally against the Islamic spirit. I condemn this act in the strongest terms. The attackers justified their attack by saying that they had avenged the Prophet Muhammad. According to the killers, the journalists had published cartoons which ridiculed the Prophet. In Islam there is no commandment to kill people by making such allegations against them. The cartoonists had exercised their freedom of expression, and freedom of expression is totally allowed in Islam.

Even during the Prophet's time there were several instances of ridicule, however the Prophet and his Companions neither punished such persons nor asked anyone to do so. On every occasion of this kind, the Prophet's Companions always tried to positively disseminate the message of Islam. The killing of those people who had published the cartoons is a gravely un-Islamic act perpetrated in the name of Islam. □

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



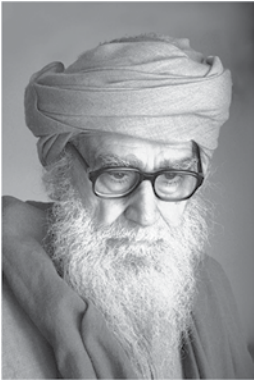
What is a Problem?

*If something causes you physical harm,
then it should be regarded as a problem.
But, if it is only perturbing your mind,
then it is not a problem. You should
ignore it and move ahead.*

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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.

BETWEEN LESSER EVIL AND GREATER EVIL

The Serenity Prayer is the common name for a prayer authored by the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971). The prayer goes as follows:

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can, And
the wisdom to know the difference.”

This saying is based on a law of nature. The fact remains that we are living in a society. We have to accept others, as it is only then we can have the room to live with others.

According to this law of nature, there is a difference between the individual and society. As an individual, one can opt for the all good. But, when it comes to society, one has to accept what is practically possible. A wise person is one who knows this difference.

In society, people tend to opt for those things that are always and entirely good for them. But, this goes against social wisdom. In society the choice is not between 'all good' and 'all bad'. In fact, the right choice here is the lesser of the two evils. In one's personal life, one can try to

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

opt for the greater good. But, in society one has to be ready to opt for what seems to be the lesser evil.

In India Muslims are obsessed with some problems that they have incorrectly labelled as “evils”. These are in fact challenges and are a part of life for all communities. Muslims try to remove these “evils”. But, what has been the result? Out of failure, they have turned negative. They have developed hatred and an unsympathetic attitude towards others. This situation results in a greater evil.

Negative thinking paralyzes one’s thinking faculty.

Deeper analysis of the issue shows that unfavourable situations in terms of the result, are lesser evils. While, negative thinking, in terms of the result, is the greater evil. Negativity paralyzes one’s thinking faculty. The result is that one’s progress is halted.

The best advice for Indian Muslims is to forget the lesser evil, and try to save themselves from the greater evil. This principle will greatly help in the development of the community. This is the wisest formula for Muslim empowerment.

If Muslims engage in negative thinking, they will only be involved in complaints and protests against others. But, if they develop positive thinking, then the immediate result of this would be tremendous. That is, they would forget the memories of the past, they would commit to a realistic planning of their actions, they would adopt a friendly behaviour toward others, their focus would shift from problems to opportunities, and they would regard others as partners instead of rivals. These traits would increase their creativity. If to date they had been an uncreative community in this country, then from now onwards they would become a creative community. And, there is no doubt that in any country it is the creative community that plays the greatest role.

The problem of evil is not a problem facing only the Muslim community. Rather, it is a general problem, and every community has its share of these problems, although in different forms. A wise community is one which understands this law of nature and becomes content with the lesser evil in order to save itself from the greater evil. This is the demand of reason as well as religion. □

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LESSONS FROM PESHAWAR KILLINGS

Abandon Violence, Embrace Peace

On December 16, 2014, a group of militants entered the Army Public School in Peshawar, Pakistan, and mercilessly gunned down about 150 students and teachers. The terrorist outfit released a photograph of the six-members who carried out the attack. A banner in the background reads as follows: '*La ilaaha illallah* — There is no god, but One God.' By this demonstration, the people who carried out the attack have themselves given us the criterion on which to judge their act.

According to a verse in the Quran, killing of an innocent human being is like killing the entirety of humankind. (THE QURAN 5: 32) In the light of this verse, it can be said that the above incident was equivalent to killing the entirety of humankind 150 times over. Without doubt, there cannot be a crime more heinous than this.

**Indifference means indirect involvement,
which in God's eyes is as bad as direct involvement.**

Now, what is the message given by the Quran to grieving relatives? There is a very relevant verse in the Quran in this regard. It says: "Beware of an affliction that will not smite exclusively those among you who have done wrong." (THE QURAN 8: 25) This is an alarming verse for the relatives of the innocent who have been killed. It is a fact that militancy in Pakistan has been going on for more than 50 years now. However, the people of Pakistan had remained almost indifferent to it as they thought that the militants were targeting others. The Peshawar killings show that remaining indifferent in such matters is not an option. One has to strive to stop these acts, otherwise one would also become its victim.

According to a *Hadith* (words & sayings of prophet), God commanded the angels to topple a town, because its people were engaged in evil acts. The angels said, 'O God, there is a person living in the town who worships You day and night, and is not directly engaged in any evil.' God replied: 'Overturn the town along with that person, as he did not try to stop his people from doing evil deeds.' (al-Mojam al-Awsat).

One aspect of the Peshawar killings was that it was carried out by a militant group of that area. The other aspect is that militancy in the area had been thriving since long. But, its people were indifferent as they considered themselves safe. The Quran gives them a warning that indifference in such matters cannot keep them secure. Indifference means indirect involvement, which in God's eyes is as bad as direct involvement.

The relatives of those killed have two choices. One is to fall victim to negative thinking. This, however, means taking the option of psychological killing after witnessing physical killing. Relatives must pray at this time. With reference to children, there is a prayer in the Bible: "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

**Let the little children come to me and
do not hinder them, for to such belongs
the kingdom of heaven. — The Bible**

The other choice is to discover their shortcomings in this regard. Grieving relatives and friends should let go of their indifference and should make every effort to root out militancy. They must tell the people of their area to abandon the false and violent version of Islam and adopt the true and peaceful version of Islam. If friends and relatives of the departed souls act accordingly, then it will be written down in history that these people were able to convert what could have been their minus into a plus to make the world safer for everyone, including our children. □

This article by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan first appeared on Dec 20, 2014 in 'The Speaking Tree' a Times of India publication.



Patriotism

*The patriotic spirit means thinking
beyond your self-interest, making others
your concern, and acknowledging
others' contribution.*

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM IN ISLAM

Discover God Freely

Man has been granted total intellectual freedom in Islam. Rather, the truth is that it was Islam itself which brought into existence that revolution in human history which granted freedom of expression to all human beings. Prior to Islam in all periods of human history, the system of absolutism prevailed in the world, leading to man being denied intellectual freedom. Intellectual freedom is no simple matter. The truth is that the secret of all human progress lies hidden in intellectual freedom.

The first benefit of this intellectual freedom is that man receives that highest good which is called fear of God (THE QURAN 5: 94). It consists of man's recognition and realisation of God in full freedom and, of one's own freewill, without any external pressure from God. So long as there is no atmosphere of total freedom, none can experience the indescribable pleasure of spiritual experience which is called fear of God in the Unseen. Hence it is impossible (without freedom) to grant anyone credit for the highest of human actions.

**The secret of all human progress
lies hidden in intellectual freedom.**

Freedom of expression is the thing which saves one from hypocrisy. Man is a thinking creature. His mind necessarily thinks and forms opinions. In such a situation if curbs are placed on freedom of expression, people's thinking cannot be ceased, the only thing that will take place is that their thinking will not come to their lips and pens. Any institution, nation, state which places curbs on freedom of expression will be ultimately brimming with hypocrites. In such an atmosphere sincere people can never be produced.

In this way intellectual freedom is directly related to creativity. A society having intellectual freedom breeds creative people whereas a society which curbs intellectual freedom will necessarily stagnate and as a result the produce of creative minds and its growth and development will for ever be stopped.

The proper stand in matters of disagreement and criticism is for people to shed their unnecessary sensitivity in this matter, instead of attempting to put a stop to the act of criticism and disagreement itself. This is the demand of Islam as well as the demand of nature.

The attribute of a true believer described in the *Hadith* (words and sayings of Prophet) is: 'Whenever a truth is presented to them, they accept it.' (*Musnad Ahmad*) Here by truth is meant a matter of truth. In other words a believer is one who has a full capacity of accepting truth. Whenever a truth is brought before him, whenever any error of his is pointed out to him, no complex or consideration comes in the way of his accepting the truth.

The highest point of this attribute is that man is always prepared or rather he eagerly awaits for someone to point out to him any shortcoming of his so that he may immediately accept it. He is almost greedy for his own reform and rectification. It is this attribute of a believer which has been expressed by Umar Faruq (companion of the prophet) in these words: 'May God bless the man who sends me the gift of my own shortcoming.'

Freedom of speech provides that conducive atmosphere in which great virtues flourish.

The fact is that the acceptance of the truth is the greatest act of worship. It is an act for which man has to make the greatest of sacrifice. Such a great sacrifice makes this act the greatest form of worship. This is the sacrifice of one's prestige; of losing one's greatness. To lose one's sense of greatness for the sake of truth is an occasion when man earns his entry into heaven by paying its price.

When does one receive the blessing of having performed this great form of worship? This opportunity comes to man only when there is full freedom of speech. When one can criticise another without any obstacle. When such an atmosphere prevails in society, people can speak freely and frankly and the people can listen to them without raising any objection.

Freedom of speech provides that conducive atmosphere in which great virtues flourish. It is in such an atmosphere that situations are created when a person is given the credit of the pronouncement of truth and another rewarded for the acceptance of the truth. □

SPIRITUALITY IN ISLAM

An Intellectual Process

What is spirituality?—or *rabbaniyat*, to use the Quranic term. It is the elevation of the human condition to a plane on which the mind is focused on the higher, non-material realities of a godly existence. The opposite of spirituality is materialism, a course followed all too often in this world. One who takes this course, giving all the attention to worldly things, or to put it another way, who centres attention on mere appearances, is regarded as being materialistic. Conversely, one who rises above material things or appearances, who finds a focus of interest in non-material things, is regarded as being spiritual or godly. The latter is one who obeys the injunction of the Quran: “Be devoted servants of God” (THE QURAN 3: 79) or, alternatively, “O people, be godly servants of Allah.”

The pleasure to be derived from material things is limited in nature and very short-lived. Whereas spiritual pleasure may be eternally savoured.

To understand what constitutes materialism, imagine that you come across a palatial house, or see an attractive car being driven along the street. If a strong desire is kindled within you to have such things in your possession; that is a clear indication that materialism is a major motivating factor in your life. One who sees the same things, but remains unaffected by the notions of luxury that they convey, and therefore feels no desire to acquire them, lives in a more rarefied sphere in which materialism plays no part. He sees no attraction in the lesser world of material appearances, being engrossed in the higher realities of the supremely spiritual life. The truly non-material person is never influenced by superficialities: his soul exists at too profound a level of spirituality.

This is true, and without any exaggeration. Those who live for worldly pleasures believe that gratification cannot be had except from material things. But this thinking is due to sheer ignorance. Worldly pleasure being the only thing they have experienced, they imagine that for enjoyment they must depend solely on material things. Had they experienced spiritual pleasure, they would certainly have forgotten material pleasure. The pleasure to be derived from material things is limited in nature and very short-lived. Whereas spiritual pleasure may be eternally savoured.

Eating tasty food certainly gives us a sense of enjoyment. But it is only when the experience of enjoyment results in an outpouring of thanksgiving to God that our pleasure knows no bounds. Travelling in a modern car is also enjoyable, but the pleasure which comes from a deep perception of reality, —i.e. the apprehension of the indescribably unique power of God as manifested in the world in the form of cars, aeroplanes and all the other modern amenities created for man's comfort—is far superior to that which one experiences while travelling in a luxurious automobile.

The materialistic person can find pleasure only in something which he or she actually experiences. But the spiritual person lives on a higher plane. For him, even seeing things in another's possession occasions an outpouring from the innermost recesses of his heart of his gratefulness to God. Another's material pleasure transforms itself into a spiritual pleasure for him as well. A materially minded person sees only the creation, while a spiritually-inclined person sees the splendour of the Creator through the creation. And it is obvious that the spiritual riches accruing from the discovery of the Creator cannot be gained in the discovery of mere objects of creation.

Furthermore, in the spiritual world there is no great difference between comfort and deprivation. What one gains from experiences of material pleasure is of far less value than what one gains from experiences of deprivation. The tears of pain flowing from an aching heart gives far greater satisfaction than the laughter of happiness due to material gain. The greatest source of pleasure is in the remembrance of God. It is this reality which finds expression in the following verse of the Quran: "It is only in the remembrance of God that hearts are comforted."

(THE QURAN 13: 28)

Those who live for worldly pleasures believe that gratification cannot be had except from material things.

Here comfort means not just the temporary solace to be found in everyday convenience, but the real comfort with its implications of peace of mind that can stem only from God Almighty. Man by nature is an idealistic creature. Anything short of ideal can attract only fitful attention from him, whereas true and lasting comfort can be achieved only through the Perfect Being.'

Existing at the level of materialism is like descending into animality. Materialism is, in other words, a form of shallowness. The real man is one who discovers the secret of living on the elevated plane of spirituality. If materialism is to live a life of limitations, spirituality is to live in limitlessness.

THE UNIVERSE—A SOURCE OF DIVINE INSPIRATION

The universe has been fashioned by God in a way that it may become a source of spiritual inspiration for man. According to the Quran, it is the quality of *tawassum* (THE QURAN 15: 75) that enables one to find inspiration in the universe. What is *tawassum*? It is the ability to understand the signs of nature. That is, to observe the phenomena of the universe in order to draw lessons from them and receive spiritual nourishment from physical events.

Tawassum is, in a sense, a matter of conversion, on a parallel with grass entering the body of the cow and through a natural process being transformed into milk. Similarly, the truly religious person is like a divine industry. He is able to convert physical events into spiritual lessons. He extracts spiritual nourishment from material things.

Spirituality is the direct result of the kind of intellectual development that takes place when a believer ponders over the Creator and His creation.

The distinguishing feature of the wise people described in the Quran is that, they continuously derive such sustenance from their environment, thus maintaining their intellectual and spiritual well-being. This is elaborated upon in the Quran as follows:

“In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the succession of night and day, there are signs for men of understanding; those that remember God when standing, sitting, and lying down, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth (saying): ‘Lord, You have not created these in vain. Glory be to You! Save us from the torment of the fire, Lord.’” (THE QURAN 3: 191)

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE - Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

It was Thursday morning, 17th June 1999. I was in Manchester, England, staying in the house of an Arab Brother Alaref Ahmad. While I was

sitting in my room on the upper floor, I heard a gentle knock on the door. When I opened it, I found a child of about five years of age. It was Qanita, the first-born daughter of Brother Alaref. She asked in all innocence and gentleness, "Do you need anything?" (*turidu haja*). Perhaps it was her mother who had sent her, and although this was a simple question, I was quite overwhelmed by this innocent voice; to the extent that I could not utter a single word in reply. This was a normal incident, but in my mind, it became transformed into a supra-normal event. Children are like the flowers of God and little angels. I felt as if God Himself had sent me an angel to discover and meet my needs.

At this moment, a famous *Hadith* (words & sayings of Prophet) came to mind: "Your Lord descends to this worldly haven every day, looks at His servants and says, 'Is there anyone who has a need and asks Me, that I may give it to him?'" (Muslim).

'Do you need anything?' was a short question that came from an innocent soul, but it was enough to cause a great revolution in my inner being.

For a while, I felt that I could see the whole of the Universe on the screen of my mind. This was a great spiritual experience which could not be expressed in human words. In the beginning, it seemed as though God, through a little angel, was saying, "O my servant, do you need anything?" Then, the matter extended to include the whole Universe with its Heaven and its Earth.

In fact, it was only a little girl at the door of my room, asking, "Do you need anything?" but in its extended sense, it was as if the whole Universe was asking the very same question.

The vast Heaven was saying, "Do you need shelter? Here I am to provide you with one, because God has ordered me to do so." The gleaming sun was saying, "Do you need light? I am here to supply it and transform your darkness into light." The majestic mountains were announcing, "Would you like to be on the highest level in all humanity? I am here at your service to help you attain that high position." The flowing water in the river-beds was murmuring, "Do you want to have a spiritual bath to purify your soul? I am here to offer you that."

And the gusting wind was asking, "Do you want to tour the Universe to see the wondrous signs of God? Here is my back for you to ride on to

embark on such a Divine journey." The trees were whispering, "Would you like to have a personality as radiant as ours? We are here to make your wish a reality." The fruits on their branches and the crops in their husks were declaring, "If you crave nourishment for your intellectual and spiritual life, we are here to provide you with it."

While this reel was playing in my mind, I heard birds chirping, "O servant of God! Here is good news for you: If you have a need, then God has made the whole Universe to serve your needs. God is so generous that He has created the whole of the Universe to be at your service, day and night. In addition to this, if you show thankfulness to God, He will give you what is greater than all of this — Eternal Paradise in which there will be "...neither fear nor grievance" (THE QURAN 6: 48).

The truly non-material person is never influenced by superficialities.

Then, the following Quranic verse came to mind: "And He gave you all that you asked for" (THE QURAN 14: 34). This means that whatever is needed for Man to live a good life on this Earth has been prepared in advance by God, directly and indirectly. Horses, for instance, were directly created; whereas aeroplanes were provided indirectly. The travelling of the voice through the air is an example of a direct provision, while its transmission by means of electronic equipment is a form of an indirect provision. Perhaps, this is what is meant by the following Quranic verse: "And (He has created) horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride, and as an adornment. And He has created (other) things which are beyond your knowledge" (THE QURAN 16: 8).

ENDLESS BLESSINGS OF GOD

God Almighty says, "O you who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you. And be grateful to Allah, if it is Him you worship" (THE QURAN 2: 172). This means that God Almighty has created everything, imaginable and unimaginable; great and small, in the most perfect form. Then, He entrusted all of these to man as gifts for his use. The only price to be paid for these endless blessings is thankfulness; it is Man's recognition, from the depths of his heart, that God is the Giver and Man the receiver.

The Quran mentions as examples of God's beneficiaries the people of Saba'. God Almighty gave them a sign in the, "two Gardens to the right

hand and to the left; (and it was said to them): ‘Eat of the provision of your Lord, and be grateful to Him: fair is your land and Oft-Forgiving is your Lord’” (THE QURAN 34: 15). This means that if Man pays the price—that is, gratitude—then not only will he be allowed to avail of these blessings, but more importantly, he will also be rewarded with eternal Paradise, which is a perfect version of this present imperfect world of God.

God Almighty bestowed upon Man all these material things which man needs if he is to live a good life on this Earth. All these things are silently conveying the following message: “O Man! Are you seeking something greater than all this? Do you want spiritual peace in addition to material peace? Do you want a world of perfection after this imperfect world? Would you like to taste the blessings of God in the world of eternity after you have tasted them in this ephemeral world? Do you wish to have all these comforts as a blessing in the world to come, after you have had them as a trial in this transient world? Would you like to realize your full potential after experiencing the limitation of your capacities in this present world?”

**If materialism is to live a life of limitations,
spirituality is to live in limitlessness.**

God created a perfect and complete world as an eternal abode for Man. Then, He wanted to know who was worthy of inhabiting that eternal world. For this purpose, He created the time-bound and imperfect abode in which we are now living. This life, therefore, is only a test. Man is constantly under the observation of his Lord. With every utterance and movement, Man is writing his own eternal destiny. One who, during his pre-death period proves himself through his conduct deserving of that world will, in his post-death period, be rewarded with admission into it. Others, however, will be flung into the Universal junkyard, that is Hell, condemned for all eternity. So, they will lose both worlds, the present incomplete world as well as the next, perfect and everlasting world.

God has revealed Himself in two books—the Quran and the Universe. The Quran is a literal version of God's word, while the Universe, or nature, is a practical demonstration of it. These two are the basic sources of spiritual inspiration for a man who seeks to live a life according to the divine scheme.

This dual source of divine inspiration is mentioned in the Quran in the following verse: "God is He who raised the Heavens without visible supports, then He ascended the Throne. He has compelled the sun and the moon to be of service, each pursuing an appointed course; He controls the affairs (of the Universe); He makes plain His revelations, so that you may be certain of the meeting with your Lord" (THE QURAN 13: 2). So, the Quran is like a guidebook. It prepares the mind so that one may properly understand the Universe and live in it as desired by God.

Hence, a *momin* (true believer) has precisely that kind of prepared mind. When he sees the Universe with its various parts functioning in an absolutely coherent manner, he will spontaneously say: "There is no god but the one God!" and when he examines it, he will find that there are so many complex happenings in its vastness. Nevertheless, he finds that every part of the universe is highly predictable. With this discovery, he realizes that it is as if God was suggesting that he himself should have a predictable character. When he observes that the various parts of the Universe function with absolute harmony, he realises that, in like manner, he should live in complete harmony with society; without hatred or malice towards anyone. When he sees the events of the universe always proceeding towards a meaningful result, he realises that man's life, too, must have a meaningful end. Thus he exclaims: "O our Lord! You have not created (all) this without purpose. Glory be to You! Give us salvation from the torment of Hellfire!" (THE QURAN 3: 191).

The signs of God lie hidden all around us in the very creation of the universe.

In brief, the universe is a manifestation of the Attributes of Almighty God. Hence, it is a source of spiritual nourishment for those who want to lead a divine life on earth. For them, the entire universe becomes a great means of their reaching spiritual perfection. This spiritual development continues incessantly throughout their earthly life. As the ultimate result of this life-long developmental process, they attain that degree of spirituality which the Quran calls the '*Rabbani* soul.' It is such as these who, in the life Hereafter, will be told by their most compassionate Lord: "Dwell in Paradise; you shall have no fear, nor shall you grieve." (THE QURAN 7: 49)

There is nothing mysterious about spirituality in Islam. It is the direct result of the kind of intellectual development that takes place when a believer ponders over the Creator and His creation: he gains something in the process that may be termed spirituality. The source, therefore, of Islamic spirituality is perusal and reflection rather than any sort of mysterious exercise. That is why the Quran rejects asceticism (monasticism), referring to it as a *bida'a* (innovation) in religion which God did not prescribe for people. (THE QURAN 57: 27)

From the Quran we learn that, in the very creation of the universe, the signs of God lie hidden all around us. A person who is in a state of keen awareness when he reflects upon the things of the world comes to see the Creator in the creatures. The meaning of the creation of the Universe is laid bare before him. Ultimately, the universe becomes a permanent source of spiritual inspiration. He is continuously nourished by it during his worldly experience, and his observation of the universe awakens in him latent divine qualities.

The result of this observation and contemplation of the universe does not result in his shunning normal life. Far from withdrawing from the world, he lives in it, participating in all its activities; yet despite his involvement, he remains aloof. That is to say, although he fulfils all his duties and responsibilities, his heart is not attached to worldly affairs. He appears to live in the world, but he stands apart from it. Thanks to this state of his heart, he acquires tremendous spiritual gains. Prophet Muhammad, says of such individuals:

“God plants wisdom in the heart of one who shows disinclination for the world.”

There is life for man in spirituality: this is indeed the real life for man. □



Don't Lose Hope

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

REACTION TO PROVOCATION

Absolutely Un-Islamic

Contrary to common belief, Islam does not teach its adherents to react against issues such as the Rushdie and the cartoon issue. Islam teaches patience in the fullest sense of the word.

On the publication of the Satanic verses by Salman Rushdie, the Muslim reaction was to have him killed forthwith; he had committed an unpardonable offense against Islam and the Prophet. All over the world, Muslims demanded his head. They were not prepared to settle for anything less than that. In a similar incident, when the Denmark cartoon was published, the Muslims reacted in much the same manner.

In the modern age, all campaigns are spread like wildfire. Reactions such these give the impression that Muslims are vengeful and violent people. Consequently, in certain Western countries notice boards are put saying, "Beware of Muslims". This shows the extreme fear engendered by the Muslim fundamentalist threat worldwide.

In all fairness one can ask, Is this Islam? Never! God has been represented in Islam as All Merciful, and the Prophet has been proclaimed the Prophet of Mercy. It is ironical that in the name of such a magnanimous religion, a certain section of the fundamentalists could not appreciate such sentiments, far less promote them. Islam can never incite people to committing murder in the name of religion, simply because someone had written a book or published a cartoon which ruffled their emotions. In fact, this is not the religion of Islam: It is the religion of certain bigoted Muslims.

Islam can never incite people to murder simply because someone had written a book or published a cartoon that ruffled their emotions.

In the days of the Prophet a large number of people existed who said many insulting things to the Prophet, but none of them were beheaded or protested against for the offence of insulting Islam and its prophet. On the contrary, in the times of the Prophet, the principle of countering words with words was followed. That is why those who spoke out against Islam no matter to what lengths they went were not penalised in any way. All that happened was that the Prophet appointed a poet

called Hassan to give a befitting answer in verse to the offenders, poetry being the main mode of public expression and sentiments. This is the example we should follow for the resolution of all such problems in true Islamic spirit and earlier traditions.

The Prophet's name was Muhammad, meaning the praised one or the praiseworthy. But when the Meccans became his most dire opponents, they themselves coined a name for the Prophet, 'Muzammam,' on the pattern of 'Muhammad,' *Muzammam* meaning condemned. They used to heap abuses on him calling him by this epithet of *Muzammam*. But the Prophet was never enraged at this distorted version of his name. All he said in return was: "Aren't you surprised that God has turned away the abuses of the Quraysh from me. They abuse a person by the name of *Muzammam*. Whereas I am Muhammad". (Ibn Hisham, 1/379). This meant that abuses were being heaped on a person whose name was *Muzammam*. Since the Prophet's name was Muhammad, not *Muzammam*, their abuses did not apply to him. This shows that Islam does not teach one to be easily provoked, even in cases of extreme provocation. □



Observing the Universe

*Observing the universe, one cannot fail
to be struck by the wonderful works of art,
the ingenious displays of consummate skill,
which lie before one. There are atoms,
dancing around within matter.*

*Two particles – without life – come together
to mould a third object – a new life. Stars
revolve in space, without the slightest
deviation from their set speed.*

*Tiny seeds are transformed into luxuriant trees.
Life in all its multiple forms seems like a torrent surging
all around us, all these events, and many more, are
happening in the universe, but they are happening silently.*

*No cosmic event defines itself. Nothing speaks to man,
revealing to him its inner significance.*

SPECIAL BLESSING TO MANKIND

Acknowledge God's Favours

The Creator has given an exceptional position to man in this whole world. This has been stated in the Quran in these words: "We have honoured man and have borne him on the land and the sea." (THE QURAN 17: 70).

The Creator has given numerous blessings to man. One such blessing is that man, as opposed to other animals, travels on vehicles. Man's body is the first vehicle. In the early period of his history, man started travel by walking on his feet. Then, he harnessed some animals and started travelling on horse and camels. Then, by applying his mind he invented the boat and started travelling by sea. In the age of modern technology he further harnessed matter and began travelling on wheeled vehicles. He then developed those vehicles that run on engines. This was a great development as now matter is utilized for transporting man from one place to another. Further from this development came aviation, by which man can fly in the air with high speed. In present times, space journeys have also become possible through rockets.

Blindness in the present world deprives them from receiving divine bounties again in the world Hereafter.

In the next verse in this sequence the Quran says: "Whoever has been blind in this life will be blind in the life to come." (THE QURAN 17: 72)

It means that every man and woman must discover the bounties of God Almighty. Every person must acknowledge this fact and lead a life on this planet earth which is in accordance with these special blessings. Those who fail to discover this fact and fail to acknowledge it will be regarded as blind. They will fail to find blessings in the Hereafter. After completing their present life, they will be made to go to a world where they shall be deprived of all kinds of bounties and blessings. Blindness in the present world deprives them from receiving divine bounties again in the world Hereafter. □



JUSTIFIED MILITANCY

Political Islam

Militancy in Pakistan and other Muslim regions is not a simple kind of militancy. It is an ideologically justified militancy. Therefore, it is not enough to condemn it in human rights terms or any other terms. A condemnation of this kind will not work in this case. Those who are engaged in militancy will brush aside such condemnation by saying that it is from the enemies of Islam who do not want to see Islam gain political power.

The genesis of this militancy goes back to those Muslim ideologues of the twentieth century who formulated the idea that Islam is a complete system and that political power is a necessary part of it, because without it Islam cannot be implemented as a complete system of life. Those who were impressed by the political interpretation of Islam tried to implement it as a political system in society. But, they saw that the political seat was already occupied by certain other people. So, they realized that in order to establish an Islamic state it was necessary to overthrow the present rulers. Thus, unseating the current political occupants became a prerequisite for them to establish an Islamic political system in society. However, when the people who already possessed political power refused to step down, those who believed in political Islam engaged in violence and militancy to overthrow them. Therefore, the ideologues of political Islam are truly responsible for militancy. The present militants or non-state actors are only trying to materialize the ideology they have received from their leaders.

The genesis of Muslim militancy goes back to the ideology that political power is a necessary part of an Islamic system.

The worst aspect of this militancy is that it is associated with Paradise by its ideologues. These ideologues made Muslims believe that if they succeed in their violent struggle and become *shahid* or martyred, they would go to *Jannah* or Paradise. Muslims thus became obsessed with this beautiful notion. For them worldly success or failure does not matter. If they succeed in the struggle, they will receive the title of *ghazi*, or victorious. Or, if they die in this struggle, even if it be through suicide bombing, then they would be regarded as *shahid* (martyr), who is guaranteed Paradise in the world Hereafter.

It is this kind of a political ideology that has motivated the Muslim youth of the present time to engage in militancy. They will remain active in this field, unless this ideology is dispelled as un-Islamic and against the *Sunnah* of the Prophet of Islam.

This Muslim militancy has greatly damaged the true picture of Islam. It is the duty of every sincere Muslim to try to prove this political theory wrong through arguments. Muslim militancy can be killed only through an ideological weapon, and not physical weapon.

Condemnation should begin from condemnation of the ideology and not just of the present militancy.

There are parties and groups in the Muslim world who had accepted this political ideology as the right ideology and became associated with it. Now, when the violence resulting from this ideology is being condemned all over the world, they too have joined in condemning it. However, this kind of condemnation will yield no result. These people must first declare that their ideologues were wrong and they had wrongly accepted their ideology. Thus, their condemnation should begin from condemnation of the ideology and not from condemnation of the present militancy. These people will not receive the credit of condemning militancy by doing so in human rights terms. Rather, they will have to first disown the political ideology of their ideologues, which they still regard as respectable, and only then can they be given the credit of having condemned militancy.

CPS International is a mission that is performing this same task. We have published hundreds of books and articles for this purpose. The magazine 'Spirit of Islam', was in part initiated for this very purpose. Those who want Muslim militancy to come to an end should earnestly spread our literature including the 'Spirit of Islam' among Muslims and others. □



Advertisement for Spirit of Islam Online. It features a laptop on the left displaying the magazine's content. On the right, the text reads: "NOW ACCESS SPIRIT OF ISLAM ONLINE" with a hand cursor icon pointing to the word "ONLINE". Below this, the website URL "www.spiritofislam.co.in" is displayed.

ALWAYS BE READY FOR REASSESSMENT

The Future is Yours

Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965) was a British politician and Nobel laureate who was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. He once said: "If we open a quarrel between past and present, we shall find that we have lost the future."

The wisdom behind this saying is that every one, individuals or nations, have some bitter memories regarding the past. Also, in their present they always face some disturbing problems. If a person is engaged in this aspect of his past and present, he will lose his normalcy. He will not be able to assess things with a calm frame of mind. This makes him unable to plan for the future in the right way.

This kind of thinking is unwise. The fact is that you have lost the past, and the present, too, is not in your control. In such a situation, the best option is to go beyond the past and present in order to make your mind free of things that are beyond your control.

The future is certainly yours. Learn the lesson from past and present experiences. Keeping in mind all these experiences, re-set your priorities, reassess the whole situation and re-plan for your future in a better way.

There is a good example of this principle in British history. In the Second World War the British government wanted to achieve its goal by way of fighting. Although they emerged victorious in the war, their victory was Pyrrhic victory. The British people reassessed the whole matter and re-planned their strategy. In the post-war elections, they rejected Winston Churchill and selected Lord Clement Attlee to lead their nation. Attlee decided to free India instead of engaging in war to continue colonization.

It is dangerous to live in the past. Also, it is disastrous for a person to refuse to go beyond the present. This kind of thinking is not good for anyone, neither for individuals nor for nations. One has to reassess and re-examine one's life on a daily basis. Only by adopting this practice can you save yourself from negative results. □

FROM THE SPIRITUAL TREE

There is a tree beside my house. I call it the 'Spiritual Tree'. I derive spiritual inspiration from it. A tree is an ever-growing being that was initially a seed possessing the potential of becoming a full-grown tree. A seed takes food from the universe around it and then grows into a tree. The same is true with spirituality, the desire for which is intrinsic to, and an integral part of, the very nature of, every human being. To realize this spirituality, Man must derive spiritual food from the universe around him. A tree converts carbon-dioxide into oxygen; a spiritual person is one who can take positive lessons from negative situations. From this perspective, a tree is an embodiment of a spiritual personality. — Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



THE SEEKER FINDS

People take heaven's name but act in a manner more befitting Hell. This means that they have never sought heaven from God; if they had, God would never have let them proceed on a path which can only lead them to Hell.

It is impossible that one should ask God for heaven and be given hell instead; that one should seek to fear the Lord and that He should harden one's heart; that one should desire to remember the Lord at all times and that He should leave one in a state of forgetfulness; that one should long to aspire to eternity and that God should fill one's heart with love of the world: that one should aspire to true, heartfelt piety and that He should make one's piety spiritless; that one should wish to worship God and that he should let one worship personalities instead.

**It is impossible that one should ask God
for heaven and be given hell instead.**

If one does not have what is desirable in life, it means that one has not sought it. Those who seek will always find. How can the Lord of

Universe leave His servant in such a state that he will be able to cry out on the Day of Resurrection, "Lord, I asked You for heaven and You have given me Hell." Truly, this is out of the question. One cannot conceive of such a thing happening. There is not a day on which the Lord does not grant His mercy to His servants; yet He gives only to those who ask. One cannot blame the Bestower if the recipient has no desire for what He has to offer. □



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ARGUMENTS AGAINST GOD AND RELIGION — Part II

The Psychological Argument

Atheistic thinkers dismiss religion as being unfounded in fact. They maintain that it springs from man's desire to find meaning in the universe. While the urge to find an explanation is not in itself wrong, they hold that the inadequacy of our predecessors' knowledge led them to wrong conclusions, namely, the existence of a God or gods, the notions that creation and destruction were a function of the godhead, that man's fate was of concern to God, that there was a life after death in heaven or hell, as warranted by the morality of man's life on earth, and that all thinking on these matters must necessarily be regulated by religion. Here we examine the psychological arguments against God or religion.

The Psychological Argument

After the revelation of natural causes, the need to posit, and to believe in the existence of God, or a supernatural force, vanished in and of itself. If the rainbow is merely a reflection of sunlight in minute droplets of water in the air, it is not, in any way, a sign placed in the sky by God. If the plague is inevitably an outbreak of this disease, it can no longer be looked on as a sign of divine wrath. If animals and plants have slowly evolved over hundreds of millions of years, there is no room for a 'Creator' of animals and plants, except in a metaphorical sense—quite different from that in which the word was originally and is now normally used. If hysteria and insanity are external symptoms of disordered minds, there is no place left in them for possession by devils. Citing such events in support of his argument, Julian Huxley observes with great conviction: "If events are due to natural causes, they are not due to supernatural causes."

It does not follow that because agnostics possess only one yardstick by which to measure reality, there exists, de facto, one and only one such yardstick.

He holds that their ascription to Supernatural Beings is merely due to man's ignorance combined with his passion for some sort of explanation. Subsequent research carried out in the field of psychology further strengthened this point of view, as it revealed that religion is the

creation of man's subconscious self rather than the discovery of some external reality. In the words of an atheistic scholar: "God is nothing but a projection of man on a cosmic screen." The concept of another world was nothing but "a beautiful idealisation of human wishes." Divine inspiration and revelation were merely an "extraordinary expression of the childhood repressions."

All these ideas are based on the premise that there is something called the subconscious. Modern research has revealed that the human mind is divided into two major parts, one being termed the conscious mind, the centre of those of our ideas, which take shape in a state of consciousness. The other part is the subconscious. In this part of the mind, ideas are not usually alive in the memory, but exist below the surface and find expression either in abnormal circumstances, or in sleep, in the form of dreams. Most human thoughts are buried in this subconscious cell, the conscious part of the mind being the smaller part. The subconscious is like the eight-ninths of the iceberg, which remain below water, while only one ninth, the conscious part, is visible.

It is a general weakness of modern thought that it jumps to extraordinary conclusions on the basis of facts which carry no weight from the logical point of view.

After extensive research in psychology, Freud discovered that, during childhood, certain happenings and ideas are repressed in our unconscious minds, which can later result in the irrational behaviour of adults. The same applies to the religious concepts of the hereafter, heaven, hell, etc., which are but echoes of those very wishes which were born in the child's mind but never fulfilled, circumstances being unfavourable, and consequently, repressed in the subconscious. Later, the subconscious, for its own satisfaction, supposed the existence of a dream world in which its unfulfilled wishes would be realized, just as, deep in sleep, one dreams of wishes coming miraculously true. When childhood fancies, which had been thoroughly repressed, suddenly burst through to the surface, producing a state of frenzy or hysteria, or other abnormal behaviour, people mistakenly attributed this to supernatural forces, which had found expression in human language. Similarly, the generation gap and the 'Father complex' in a family gave rise to the concept of God and slave. Thus what was simply a social malaise was carried to the cosmic scale in order to forge a theory. In the words of Ralph Linton:

The Hebrew picture of an all-powerful deity who could only be placated by complete submission and protestations of devotion, no matter how unjust his acts might appear, was a direct outgrowth of this general Semitic family situation. Another product of the exaggerated superego to which it gave rise was the elaborate system of taboos relating to every aspect of behaviour. One system of this sort has been recorded and confided in the Laws of Moses. All Semitic tribes had similar series of regulation differing only in content. Such codes provided those who kept them with a sense of security, comparable to that of the good child who is able to remember everything that his father ever told him not to do and carefully abstains from doing it. The Hebrew Yahveh was a portrait of the Semitic father with his patriarchal authoritarian qualities abstracted and exaggerated. Such a judicial concept which believes in God being a political authority has occupied a central place not only in Judaism, but is also incorporated in the religious concepts of Christianity and Islam as well.

Analysis of the Psychological Argument Against God and Religion

The psychological argument holds that far from being a reality, the concept of God and the life hereafter is a myth, a mere fiction, a stretching of the human personality and human wishes to the cosmic scale. What possible basis can there be for this claim? Moreover, if we were indeed to claim that human personality and human wishes did, in fact, exist on a cosmic plane, it is doubtful if anyone would have sufficient factual data to refute this claim.

The unconscious mind stores only experiences whereas Prophets proclaimed great unknown truths.

Talking of scales, let us see what is happening at the atomic and sub-atomic level, where we are dealing with infinitesimally small distances. According to the Bohr atomic model, the atom possesses an internal structure similar to our solar system, with electrons revolving around a nucleus in discrete and stable orbits, in the same way that planets revolve around the sun. How vastly different are the scales; for in the solar system, distances are measured in millions of miles. Yet, in spite of the scales being so different as to boggle the imagination, the systems are similar. Would it be any wonder then if the consciousness, which we as human beings experience existed on a cosmic scale but

in a totally perfect form? As an intellectual exercise, it is no more difficult to accept this, than to accept the notion that genes, although only microscopic elements in the human embryo, control the growth and development of an adult human being. Might not the human and natural desire for a world immeasurably vaster than our own be an echo—spiritual and otherworldly—of a world already existing in this universe in a form invisible to human eyes?

Psychologists are right in holding that sometimes ideas are repressed in our minds during childhood, which erupt at a later stage in an extraordinary form. But to infer that it is this very characteristic in humans which has given birth to religion is to jump to wrong conclusions. It is a misinterpretation, if not an actual distortion of a perfectly ordinary fact. It is as if observing a potter designing an image of clay, we deduce that it must be he who has created human beings. Image making and the creation of the human body differ from each other in so qualitative a fashion that to draw any parallels with God's creativity would be utterly preposterous. It is only minds which see fit to make such analogies which look upon religion as a result of the inchoate ramblings of mentally deranged individuals.

**Religious thoughts expressed in prophetic diction are
virtue and purity par excellence.**

It is a general weakness of modern thought that it jumps to extraordinary conclusions on the basis of facts which carry no weight from the logical point of view. An emotionally disturbed individual may babble abnormally under the influence of thoughts repressed in the unconscious, but how does this prove that the knowledge of the universe revealed to the prophets is also a 'babbling' of the same nature—a 'miracle' of the unconscious? It is possible to accept incoherence in sleeping and in waking as the result of mental disturbance, but to assert the same about divine revelation is to descend to illogical and unscientific argument. It merely shows that those who reason in this way are hard put to find any other criterion by which to judge the extraordinary words of the prophets. It does not follow that because agnostics possess only one yardstick by which to measure reality, there exists, *de facto*, one and only one such yardstick.

The thoughts and wishes, suppressed in the unconscious, are mostly such evil designs as could not be realized for fear of punishment and or social ostracism. Now, if the subconscious part of the mind of a

mentally disturbed person begins to find an outlet, what is likely to come gushing out of it? Obviously the afflicted person will talk incoherently while attempting to give expression to those same hostile feelings and evil desires, which had remained suppressed in his subconscious. And, if we are to think of him as a prophet, it will be as a prophet of evil, certainly not of good.

Religious thoughts expressed in prophetic diction are, by comparison, virtue and purity par excellence. The true prophet is, himself, the epitome of virtue and his purity in thought, word and deed has no parallel. His ideas, moreover, exercise such a powerful influence upon people that the very society from which, at one time, the prophet had initially to conceal his ideas—out of fear—is now so greatly attracted towards them, that even after a lapse of centuries together, it still steadfastly adheres to them.

From a psychological point of view, the unconscious mind is actually a vacuum. In it, nothing initially exists. It receives all impressions through the conscious part of the mind. This implies that the unconscious stores only those experiences to which people have been exposed at one time or the other. The unconscious can never become a repository for facts which have not been experienced. But, surprisingly, religion as proclaimed by the prophets, contains truths which were previously unknown to them and for that matter, to the entire human race. It was only with the advent of the prophets that certain facts could be propagated. Had the unconscious been the repository on which they drew, they could not have become the purveyors of great, but hitherto unknown truths.

**The religion proclaimed by the prophets contain
a great body of knowledge, touching, in one way
or the other, all branches of learning.**

The religion proclaimed by the prophets contain a great body of knowledge, touching, in one way or the other, all branches of learning, such as astronomy, physics, biology, psychology, history, civilization, politics and sociology. No individual, however gifted, whether drawing on the conscious or subconscious minds, has ever been able to produce such an all-embracing discourse, free from erroneous decisions, vain conjectures, unreal statements, miscalculations and unsound logic. But religious scriptures are admirably and miraculously free of such deficiencies. In their approach, reasoning and decisions, they encompass

all of the human sciences. Over the centuries, succeeding generations have sifted through the finding of their predecessors, examined them, considered them from all angles, and often disproved and rejected what their forebears had considered truths as firm as rocks. But the truths, which are enshrined in religion, remain unchallenged to this day. So far, it has not been possible to point out a single error, or even discrepancy in them worth the name. Those, who have ventured to attack the bastions of religion have eventually been forced to fall back without scaling its battlements, for they, themselves, have finally been proved to be in the wrong. □



Does God Exist?

The main reason why people fail to attach themselves to religion in the modern age is that they cannot see God so they do not believe in Him. This argument was valid when science had reached only the macro world and when 'only what was observable was the reality'.

At that time the atom was considered to be the smallest unit of the observable material world. But when the atom was split, it was confirmed that it was nothing but a mad dance of energy waves or electrons, which could not be observed. Scientists however continued to believe in the concept of the atom, albeit unobservable.

A new logic then came into being. Not only was the direct or observable argument thought to be valid, but inferential arguments or the invisible sources of visible effects were also considered valid. An example of the latter is that X-rays are not visible to the naked eye, but their effect can be seen when we observe the X-ray film. Using the valid inferential argument, if you can believe in the unseen X-rays as you can see their effect, why can you not believe in an unseen God, whose meaningful creation – the Universe you see all around you?

THE STRAIGHT PATH FOR SOCIAL LIVING

Peace and Harmony in Society

There is a verse in the Quran regarding the Hudaibiya Treaty (628 A.D) in the chapter entitled 'Victory' which reads as follows: "...so that He may make it a sign to true believers and guide you along a straight path." (THE QURAN 48: 20) The 'straight path' referred to in this verse is different from the 'straight path' referred to in the first chapter of the Quran, 'The Opening'.

In the first chapter of the Quran, the 'straight path' of guidance is the 'straight path' of individual and personal life. And, the 'straight path' referred to in the chapter 'Victory' is the path of peace and harmony. In other words, it is the 'straight path' of social living.

According to the Quran, the entire Universe is functioning under a set of laws established by God and does not deviate from these laws even one little bit. "The sun does not overtake the moon, nor can the night outpace the day; each floats in [its own] orbit." (THE QURAN 36: 40). As the Universe is under the stringent and compulsive laws of God, it can only exhibit a predictable nature. On the other hand, God has bestowed man with a free will, the misuse of which results in violence and conflict in the human world. In order to control this violence and conflict of the human world, the Quran gives guidance referred to as the 'straight path'.

The culture of revenge results in a chain of wars.

The Quran was revealed in the first half of the seventh century in Arabia. At that time, there were many tribes in Arabia who were in constant conflict with one another. Tribal warfare was common. The nature of these wars was such that the vanquished tribes would refuse to accept defeat, instead an incentive for revenge would emerge leading to further warfare. In this manner after every victory, there would be a series of revenge wars. Because of this culture of seeking revenge, the Arab tribes were constantly engaged in a chain of wars. This chain of wars is referred to in the Quran as an 'abyss of fire.' '....He rescued you from the brink of an abyss of Fire.' (THE QURAN 3: 103)

One example of this from the life of Prophet Muhammad was the Battle of Uhud. In this battle, Abu Sufyan, was the leader of the Quraish against the Prophet and his companions. After their victory in the Battle of Uhud, Abu Sufyan proclaimed that, 'today was the day of revenge for the defeat at Badr.'

The Prophet was sent with the mission to convey God's creation plan to mankind and to invite man towards God. The culture of tribal warfare was a huge obstacle in his path. Consequently, we see that immediately after this battle the Prophet changed his policy. In the following 'battle' of Ahzab, the Prophet setup a trench to act as a buffer between themselves and their opponents because of which the need for violence itself was nullified. In a similar manner, the Prophet after unilaterally accepting all the conditions of his opponents made the peace agreement known as the Treaty of Hudaibiya. This peace agreement is referred to in the Quran as the '...straight path.' (THE QURAN 48: 2). This accord in reality was the 'straight path' of social living.

**The method of deliverance and relief from war
as given by the Quran is to unilaterally accede
and put an end to all violence.**

In social life there will always be different points of view and disagreements between opposing parties. In these situations, success cannot be achieved on a bilateral basis. It is mandatory that one party wins and the other loses and it is always the case that the losing party refuses to accept defeat. This is the same situation on the battlefield as well. The vanquished refuse to concede victory and instead begin to plan for revenge. That is why conflict, discord and wars can only be resolved or terminated unilaterally.

In order to achieve one's purpose, the Prophet of Islam was the first person to introduce this approach to the Arab people. The entire world was unaware of such a strategy in the matter of resolving conflicts. The Arabs of those times thought that war could only be put to an end by war. For the first time in history, the Prophet of Islam demonstrated that a unilateral accord was the only successful method to conclude a war and usher in peace and harmony amongst the people.

In this manner, through the Prophet of Islam, God saved the people of Arabia from the 'abyss of fire' or the chain of wars.

Even today, when the media brings us news of fighting and war; these are in reality wars of revenge. One modern day example of these chain revenge wars is the Israel-Arab conflict in Palestine that has been ensuing for decades. A recent news report from this conflict is as follows:

'Twelve year old Abdul Rahman Al-Batish hasn't stopped crying since he lost his father in the bombing of an apartment (in Gaza). "They are killers, and one day I will avenge my father."

ITV's Middle-East correspondent reports him as saying.

In reality, todays Muslims are facing the same situation as the tribal Arabs of the days of ignorance before the Prophet of Islam. Muslims are showing the same culture of revenge standing on the brink of the 'abyss of fire', referred to in the Quran. The method of deliverance and relief from never ending cycle, given by the Quran is to unilaterally accede and put an end to all violence and terror. After this, you will find that the opponents will also stop all violence and peace will prevail.

The Treaty of Hudaibiya is an example of the 'straight path' of social living.

To bring wars to an end, and establish peace and harmony, this was the only method before and the only successful method that can be used in the present. And this is the method referred to in the Quran as the straight path (God's path) of social living. □



Positive Behaviour

*Do not succumb to others' remarks against you.
Do not get perturbed if someone tries to give
you a bad name. In short, do not let
others dictate your behaviour.*

PEACE MISSION

A Report by Mohammed Wajihuddin

A missionary, who spreads God's message, is bound to fail if he preaches revenge, says Maulana Wahiduddin Khan in Mumbai, Mohammed Wajihuddin reports.....

Like many other things in Islam, Dawah is a much misunderstood term. It literally means 'to call'. And in the Quran, it is used as 'calling people to the message of God' or conveying the divine message to humankind. Dawah is not a tool to convert or an armed struggle against a regime or group of people as many Islamists today would like us to believe. When Islamic scholar Maulana Wahiduddin Khan talks about Dawah, he attempts to translate the word's Quranic interpretation into action. This was evident at a recent three day Dawah meet in Mumbai, organized by the Centre for Peace and Spirituality international (CPS) which the Maulana heads.

Spreading the message of God is easier for those who understand God's creation plan. Under this plan, confrontation is avoided and opportunities are availed of. When God opens His bounties on earth in the form of rain, He actually provides enormous opportunities to various groups, including farmers. Once the dry soil gets wet due to rains, farmers avail these opportunities and sow seeds only to get a good harvest later. "Those farmers who miss the opportunity and don't act in time, will repent later," said the Maulana. "The same applies to the people who want to do the *Dawah* work. They must do it while they are alive as they won't get an opportunity to do it here after."

A divine message has universal appeal and it should be shared with every human being, irrespective of caste, creed and gender.

Dawah is a peaceful act. While it is done peacefully, it is wrong to expect that it can be done only in a peaceful atmosphere. There will always be a section of society trying to create trouble for those who want to live in peace and tranquility. No prophets or saints enjoyed an ideal situation or environment to spread the message of God. Prophets like Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad had to work in adverse conditions. Through their message, they challenged established socio-religious norms, though they kept their struggle peaceful. Muhammad would

have not succeeded had he followed a violent method for spreading God's message. Makkah was a major commercial and religious centre since Abraham, his wife Hajira and son Ishmael created a sanctuary in the middle of a desert. Abraham conveyed the message of God here. Centuries later Muhammad too utilised the precincts of the Kabah in Makkah to tell people about God's creation plan.

Revenge and *Dawah* are poles apart. A *daee*, one who gives *Dawah*, is bound to fail if he preaches revenge. Many so-called modern *daee*'s exhort their followers to avenge real or imagined injustice. Hafiz Saeed's 'Jammat-ud-Dawah' in Pakistan allegedly carried out an armed struggle against the people or state it deems anti-Muslim. This violence-oriented work cannot be called *dawah*. It is a political interpretation of the Islamic message of *dawah*. Political interpretation of an Islamic term is inherently dangerous as it involves violence, while a spiritual interpretation is harmless and peaceful.

Political interpretation of an Islamic term is inherently dangerous as it involves violence, while a spiritual interpretation is harmless and peaceful.

A spiritually-oriented person creates positive vibes around him, while the one who is politically motivated creates jealousy and enmity. A *daee* cannot afford to be politically oriented as jealousy and ambition will make his message look hollow. People involved in true *dawah* work consider the whole world their audience. They cannot be selective. A divine message has universal appeal and it should be shared with every human being, irrespective of caste, creed and gender. "Nobody is your enemy", declares the Maulana. Instead of seeing others as potential enemies, people doing *dawah* work see everyone as potential friends. Animosity cannot be the basis for spreading divine message. It can be only spread through friendship, mutual love and trust.

Conspiracy theorists are enemies of *dawah* work. Those who feel and always blame that some people are conspiring against them are not ideal *dawah* workers. And a workshop like the one Maulana addressed showed *dawah* is a peaceful mission which has no place for conspiracy theorists, rabble rousers and doubting Thomases. □

WAITING FOR A HIGHWAY

Impediment to Progress

Omar Abdullah is the Chief Minister of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. In an interview with The Times of India (December 1, 2014), he was asked why there is still no development in his state. He referred to a lack of 'roads' in his state and said: "We are waiting for the four-lane Jammu-Srinagar highway."

There is a general lesson in this answer: Everyone is waiting for a supposed "four-lane highway". Every person has developed the obsession that he needs a "highway" before he can progress in life. As soon as he would acquire that highway, he would be able to start running towards his future unimpeded and reach his destination quickly.

This waiting psyche is a common feature of every man and woman. Everyone is unaware of that opportunity which is presently available to him or her. Every person feels that they can play a heroic role in life, provided they were given that required highway.

But, this kind of thinking goes against the laws of nature. Nature follows its own laws and not anyone's obsession. This is a serious problem in the life of every man and woman. Due to this phenomenon everyone lives in 'waiting'. No person is free of this psyche. Everyone is waiting for the train, which will never arrive.

**Don't wait for the moment; rather discover
the opportunity that is already present,
and avail it with wise-planning.**

The only successful strategy of life is in the acceptance of reality. It is reality that prevails and not anyone's personal whim.

Don't wait for the moment; instead every moment try to discover the opportunity that is already present, and avail it with wise planning. In this way, you will surely find an entry into the list of super-achievers.

The definition of a wise man and that of an unwise man is very simple. One who lives in his own mind is an unwise person, and one who knows

the reality that exists in the external world is a wise person. Success is one-percent based on your mind's desire, while the remaining ninety-nine percent depends on knowing what the external world is ready to give you.

The fact is that man did not create this world. The Creator is someone other than ourselves. We have to know what the scheme of things is in the mind of the Creator. We have to adjust our mind with this scheme of things; like one cogwheel that attaches to another. Success will then be as certain as the rising of the sun after the night has passed. □



A Problem is not a Problem

When you find some problem in the external world, believe in advance that the real place where the problem exists is only in your own mind. So, analyse the situation and try to re-engineer your mind, and then you will find that the problem is completely solved. Seeing a problem as a problem is the problem. If you see a problem as a normal event then there is no problem.

A problem is an inevitable natural phenomenon. When you are immature you see a problem as a problem, but when you are mature, you are able to see the problem as a normal event then there is no problem. It all depends upon your perspective.

Sheikh Sadi has narrated a story in his book, Gulistan that, once, he was walking on a street barefoot, and was complaining that he had no shoes to wear, but as he walked on, he saw a man who had lost his legs. Sheikh Sadi compared himself with this man. He said to himself: I am without shoes but this man is without legs so I am better than this man. Thus, he managed the tension and became normal.

DICHOTOMOUS THINKING IS WRONG

Find the Third Option

During the First World War the leaders of the Communist Party were engaged in a supposed class struggle between the labour class and capitalist class. At that time they used to say: "One who is not with us is our enemy." This thinking is quite unnatural. According to the law of nature the right maxim of life is: 'One who is not with us is our supporter.'

This support is always in the potential sense and that is why people generally fail to recognize this great gift of nature. This unawareness leads to an evil; that is being hateful towards others. Perhaps the Prophet of Islam was the first person in history, who by his example made people aware of this universal principle—that dichotomous thinking is wrong, there is always a third option in life.

One such example is that the Prophet of Islam started his mission in 610 AD Mecca. At that time the situation was apparently unfavourable for the Prophet, Kabah had been built by the Prophet Abraham as a centre of monotheism but in later history it was turned into a tribal temple by the local people and various forms of worship were carried out in its premises.

Muslims must utilize the Western bounties for the sake of Islam just like they are utilizing it for the sake of their own interest.

The Prophet of Islam was a Prophet of Monotheism; the situation in the Kabah appeared to be a great problem for his mission. But at the same time there was an opportunity, as the Kabah had become a place of general gathering for all the tribes. The Prophet of Islam did not become a victim of dichotomous thinking instead he was able to discover a third option. The Prophet ignored the problem and he tried to use the assembly for his mission of communicating the message of God to mankind. This policy proved to be very successful and within a short-period, the Prophet's mission spread all over Arabia.

The Prophet of Islam by his example showed that human life is not two dimensional; instead it is three dimensional. In other words, in

social life the equation is not between friend and foe, there is another equation; that of friend and supporter.

This contribution of the Prophet of Islam towards history was so extraordinary and unique that even his followers were unable to understand this wisdom. Strangely they failed to re-apply this principle in their lives. The worst example of this is in the present age. In the present age, a new phenomenon emerged called 'Western civilization'. Potentially the Western civilization could have been a great supporter of Islam, but due to their total unawareness of this Prophetic example, Muslims consider the Western civilization an enemy and are fighting against it.

In social life, one who is not a friend is not an enemy either; he is a supporter.

Modern civilization is not a product of European factory; in fact it is a product of the factory of nature. The role of the West is that they unfolded the potentials of nature and made them available to all mankind.

There is no monopoly in nature. Nature is based on universality rather than monopoly. Wherever the situation of monopoly is created, nature intervenes to de-monopolize. This principle is given in the Quran in these words: "We bring these days to men by turns." (THE QURAN 3: 140)

There were enormous signs hidden in nature. These signs are mentioned in the Quran as *ayat*, *kalaymat*, *aala*, etc., it was required by man to unfold this natural treasure, but for thousands of years, nations failed to do this. Muslims were also given a chance for about one thousand years, but they too failed to do this job. Then God Almighty, selected Western nations. They did this job successfully. Now for Muslims it is not an option to declare Western nations as their enemy, instead they must acknowledge their contribution, they must present their thanks to them, and try to avail civilizational development in their favour.

The only thing that is required is that Muslims must utilize the Western bounties for the sake of Islam just like they are utilizing it for the sake of their own interest. □

THE CONCEPT OF THE HEREAFTER IN ISLAM

The Eternal World

According to Islam, the present world is not an eternal abode. The Quran tells us that man is placed here only temporarily, so that his moral fibre may be tested in terms of his obedience to God's will. He must always remember that there will be the life hereafter, or *Akhirat* as it is known in Islamic terminology. This is also referred to as *Ma'ad*, which means a place to which one returns.

There is a time limit to mortal existence. Death marks the end of the testing period for all human beings. But death only means a change of abode, for the soul never dies. Man returns to the realm whence he came, so that he may wait for Judgement Day. That realm, the life hereafter, is the eternal world. Thus man's life is divided into two parts: a brief stay in this world and an eternal life in the next world. To the ungodly, it is only then that it becomes obvious that a life which is eternal is far more important than this present existence.

Man is placed here only temporarily, so that his moral fibre may be tested in terms of his obedience to God's will.

God created human beings and made them responsible for their actions by granting them freedom. If there were no Afterlife in which the good were rewarded and the bad punished, there would be no justice; in which case, it would appear meaningless to create people with a conscience and a sense of responsibility. But God is just and always acts justly. Hence it is the absolute demand of justice that there should be a Day of Judgement on which everyone is brought to book.

After death, human beings will, therefore, leave this present, ephemeral abode and, on the Day of Judgement, will enter another world, which will be eternal. When the time comes for the Last Reckoning, God will destroy this world and replace it with a permanent, everlasting world. All human beings will then be resurrected and brought before the Almighty to be judged. On that day, everyone will stand alone before God. Those who have done good deeds in the world they have left behind will be rewarded. Their reward will be paradise, a state of joy, happiness and peace.

The Quran states: "God has created death and life to test which one of you is best in conduct." (THE QURAN 67: 1)

God created human beings and made them responsible for their actions by granting them freedom.

Death is not the end of our lives; it is the beginning of our real life. Because our future is being decided on the basis of our present performance, we can either make use of our opportunities on earth to ensure a well-deserved place for ourselves in Paradise, or we can throw them away and condemn ourselves to punishment in Hell.

The belief in the Hereafter naturally has a great influence on the life of a believer. When he knows that God is watching all his actions, his behaviour will be responsible. He will always endeavour to lead his life in consonance with the will of God and will inevitably avoid any course which will incur God's displeasure.

Furthermore, the concept of the Hereafter gives a fuller meaning and purpose to the life of the believer. One who firmly believes in this concept will not give in to greed and other such worldly failings. He will not be a materialist, for he knows that this material life will surely come to an end with death, whereas there will be a whole eternity before him in the Afterlife, during which he will certainly rejoice in having paid due attention to the spiritual side of life on this earth. □

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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

***Alif Lam Mim* These are the verses of the Book of wisdom, a guide and a mercy for those who do good, for those who attend to their prayers and pay the zakat and who have firm faith in the Hereafter: these are rightly guided by their Lord: and these are the ones who will prosper.** (THE QURAN 31: 1-5)

In this world, the criterion of the proper performance of a task (*ihsan*) is that it should be in accordance with the facts. From this point of view, one who carries out a task in this way is one who admits the reality (*muhsin*); his actions become a manifestation of his spirit of submission.

Those who have it in their nature to mould themselves according to the factual position, are those who, when the Truth presents itself to them, accept it without suffering from any psychological complications. They immediately start fulfilling its practical requirements—they become regular offerers of prayers (*salat*), which is symbolic of fulfilling God's will. They give prescribed alms (*zakat*), which amounts to honouring the rights of God's subjects in the economic sphere. They shun the worship of worldly achievements and begin to think fondly of the Hereafter, because they know that the place where the question of success or failure shall finally be decided is nowhere other than the Hereafter.

But among men there are some who spend their time in idle diversions only to lead people astray from the path of God, and without knowledge, hold it up to ridicule: for such there is a humiliating punishment in store. Whenever Our messages are

conveyed to such a person, he turns away in his arrogance, as though he had not heard them—as though his ears were sealed: give him, then, the tidings of grievous suffering [in the life to come]. Surely, those who believe and do good works shall enter gardens of bliss, wherein they will abide forever. That is God's true promise; He is the Mighty, the Wise One. (THE QURAN 31: 6-9)

Utterances are of two types—one offering good advice and the other entertainment. The former makes one realize one's responsibilities and urge a man to do good rather than commit any impropriety. However, in every age those who have taken an interest in words of advice have indeed been very few. It has always been in the nature of man to prefer being entertained. Books which give good advice, are plentiful but he is always the more frequent purchaser of books which divert his mind and which do not demand any serious action on his part.

The guilt of one who goes to the length of inducing others to indulge in purely entertaining (i.e. wasteful) pursuits is greater, because he has made himself the leader of dissipation, keeping people preoccupied with pointless activities and rendering them incapable of giving their attention to more serious affairs.

Conceit is the worst trait in a man. If Truth presents itself before a conceited individual, he will not accept it, because he thinks too highly of himself. He will contemptuously overlook it and press on regardlessly. Just the opposite is true of the believers. Their advice-loving nature compels them to accept the truth and to surrender their life to it completely.

He has created the skies without any support that you could see, and has placed firm mountains upon the earth, lest it sway with you, and has caused all manner of living creatures to multiply thereon. And We sent down water from the skies, and thus We made every kind of excellent plant grow there: this is God's creation. Show me then what those besides Him have created! The wrongdoers are in manifest error. (THE QURAN 31: 10-11)

The universe exists in infinite space. The continuous revolving of innumerable large stellar bodies in this universe is a great and awe-inspiring phenomena. Amidst these, exists an extremely exceptional sphere—the earth, upon which numerous factors and arrangements have made the human life possible. Be it the maintenance of balance

on the earth by the high mountains, or the opulence of valuable resources like water, greenery, etc., everything is indicative of a perfect system of management.

Who then, except Almighty God can manage this huge system? As such, is it legitimate for man to worship things, other than God?

We bestowed wisdom on Luqman, saying, 'Be grateful to God: he who is grateful, is grateful only for the good of his own soul. But if anyone is ungrateful, then surely God is self-sufficient and praiseworthy.'

Luqman said to his son, counselling him, 'My son, do not associate anything with God. Associating others with Him is a terrible wrong.'

(THE QURAN 31: 12-13)

Little has been recorded in history about Luqman, except that he was a wise and God-fearing man. The Quran says that Luqman was a grateful subject of God and who, as a father, advised his son to save himself from polytheism. Polytheism holds that beings other than God are man's benefactors and that, man should direct his feelings of gratitude towards them. The belief in the oneness of God stems from the intense realisation that God is the sole benefactor of man and as such all his gratitude should be shown only to that One.

We have enjoined man to show kindness to his parents—for his mother bears him, in hardship upon hardship, and his weaning takes two years. [We said] Give thanks to Me and to your parents; all will return to Me. But if they press you to associate something with Me about which you have no knowledge, do not obey them. Yet be kind to them in this world and follow the path of those who turn to Me. You will all return to Me in the end, and I will tell you everything that you have done. (THE QURAN 31: 14-15)

After God, a man's parents have the first claim upon his loyalty. But, if the parents' desire clashes with God's will, then preference has to be given to God's will and the parents' wishes have to be accorded the second place. However, it is necessary even then to continue to serve the parents as usual.

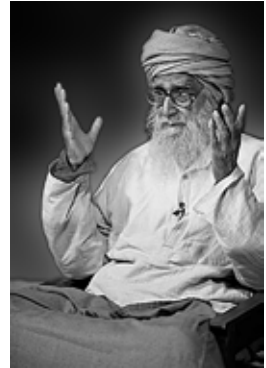
Striking this balance between two different requirements is the highest example of wisdom of Islam, and the secret of all successes is hidden in this wisdom. □

ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan answers questions posed by students on the eve of their exams.

The pressure of studies, together with the repeated questioning of my parents, is stressful and I end up getting very depressed thinking of the consequences if I do not meet my parents' expectations.



Parents are always eager for their children's success. But, at the same time, they should be realists. Parents must limit themselves to wise counseling. It would be counterproductive if they constantly question their children and put inordinate pressure on them.

Parents must know that in practical life, getting less marks in exams is a relative thing, because a student learns even if he gets less marks, and then in the next term, he tries to score better. This is the case in other spheres aspects of life, too. There are many examples to prove this. For example, Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Vivekananda were not toppers in school, but they became heroes in practical life.

We are told that board exams are crucial for students, but fear and uncertainty haunt me and have made me very apprehensive about the future. Some of my friends say that they'll commit suicide if they don't perform well.

According to my experience, nothing of this sort is crucial in life. What is important in life is sincerity and determination. Parents must inculcate this spirit in their children. Qualifying an examination is good only for securing further admission in educational institutions, but it is not necessary for a better life in the future. Parents must educate their children in the principles of life and try to inculcate in them virtues like patience, wisdom, and adjustment. They must help them understand the importance of a realistic approach. They must teach them to learn from failure, and to know that it really doesn't matter if you don't get your way in everything. These are the things that alone come to use in real life. If you top in examinations, it is no guarantee that you will also top in life. If you are aware of the principles of life, then success will follow you. You mentioned about your friends talking about suicide.

Suicide is not an option. Discover your potential, and you will realise that suicide is akin to underestimating both yourself and the Creator.

I think I have a split personality that is compelling me on, like a strict mentor. But pressure to match up to my friends hounds me, and I find that I am unable to concentrate. How do I deal with this?

Don't take your friends as ideals to emulate. There are thousands of books that discuss the lives of successful persons. You should read these books and try to draw lessons from the lives of such people.

Excessive academic stress is telling on my nerves. I sometimes go completely blank, and I am on the verge of a breakdown. I want my family to talk to me more, but they leave me entirely alone, saying that I shouldn't be disturbed. I am beginning to feel desperate. I have even thought of running away from home.

What your family is doing is out of love. In fact, they are giving you more time to discover your capabilities. Then why complain? Take it as an opportunity. Your books are your best companions. Try to live on your own, then you won't complain about others. The other name for this attitude of yours is 'underestimation of yourself'. Knowing more about the lives of successful people is more important than contact with family members, as the former gives you guidance for life, while the latter only give you emotional satisfaction.

There is a world beyond parents, friends, and school. You should try to increase your learning by knowing about this world. And, be thankful to the person who gives you more time by not coming to meet you!

What if I start panicking during my Maths exam? I keep thinking about this and get tense, and this might make me blank out. I am deeply worried about this.

This is not a bad sign; it only means that you have some capability other than in Mathematics. You should discover that capability and develop it; and in this way you may emerge a successful person. There are so many persons in history, in the present and in the past, who were not good in Mathematics but who emerged as heroes in practical life!

There are numerous subjects other than Mathematics. The Creator has given different capabilities to different people so that in every field people who can excel emerge. You also have a special quality; discover it and try to make progress in that field. □

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