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# SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

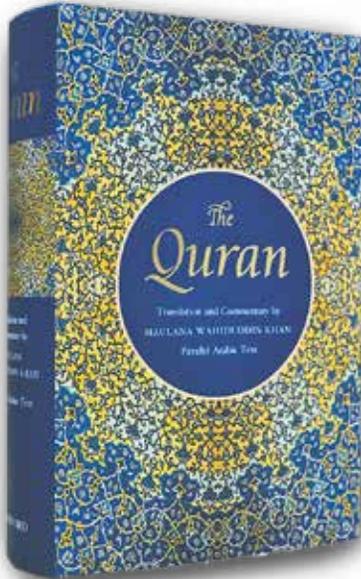


**Do not allow the memory of unpleasant experiences to stay on permanently.**

# The Quran

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY  
**MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN**  
PARALLEL ARABIC TEXT

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



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

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# SPIRIT OF ISLAM

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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

ISSUE 43 JULY 2016

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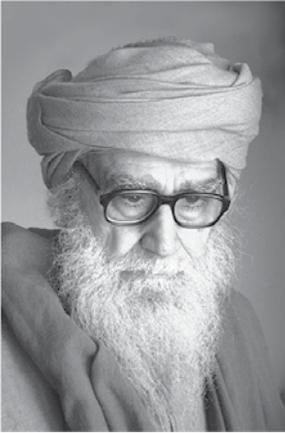
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## FROM MAULANA'S DESK



*Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, born in 1925, in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, is an Islamic spiritual scholar who is well-versed in both classical Islamic learning and modern disciplines. The mission of his life has been the establishment of worldwide peace. He has received the Padma Bhushan, the Demiurgus Peace International Award and Sayyidina Imam Al Hassan Peace award for promoting peace in Muslim societies. He has been called 'Islam's spiritual ambassador to the world' and is recognized as one of its most influential Muslims<sup>1</sup>. 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.*

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## RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW

**T**HE most popular formula among people today is 'right here, right now'. This means that people want to live in their present and are not willing to think about the other side of life.

The concept of 'right here, right now' is not workable. This thinking is against human nature. The sensible decision can only be one in which a person makes eternity his goal. According to human nature, anything less than eternity cannot truly be man's goal. If a person adopts a method which is not in accordance with his nature, then he will forever live in stress.

According to a survey, roughly 150,000 people die every day. Among the dead, there are people belonging to all groups—children, youth and the old. Long life has always been man's beautiful dream. All the kings and rich people wanted to have a long duration of life and were ready to give all the wealth they possessed for it. But history tells us that all of them failed in achieving this goal. By nature, man desires an eternal life but he only gets a very short span of life.

In the present age, longevity has become a subject of medical research. But to this date efforts towards lengthening human life have failed

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

to bring about any real achievement. It is said that man's average life expectancy has now increased. However, this statement is highly debatable. It is not an accepted fact. But for the sake of argument, I would say that even if it is right, it doesn't mean that one now has a greater number of active years of life. It rather only means that man is now capable of spending some years before death in hospital or in old age homes. This kind of 'longevity' has no real importance at all.

***The right attitude towards life is that which takes into account the post-death period.***

The right attitude towards life is that which takes into account the post-death period. The concept of life that is based on the pre-death period alone will be certainly unnatural, and an unnatural attitude is certainly harmful. □

**Maulana Wahiduddin Khan**  
editor@thespiritofislam.org



## **Success**

*The conviction that one's goals are worthwhile, the observation of discipline with no contradiction between words and thoughts, cool thinking even in times of crisis—all these are qualities of mind and heart which determine success, and obviate failure in the wider field of life.*

# THE HOLY MONTH OF FASTING AND PRAYER

## *Spiritual Nourishment*

**R**AMAZAN, the month of fasting, is a blessed spiritual period for believers, for it is during this month that they do their utmost to awaken and enhance their spirituality. The aim of fasting during Ramazan is to diminish a person's dependence on material things, so that he may elevate himself to a higher plane of devout living. Abiding by the guidelines of fasting raises believers to a state of humility, truth and honesty.

It was in the month of Ramazan that revelations of the Quran first began to be made to Prophet Muhammad. The objective of fasting has been aptly summed up in this Quranic verse: 'Believers, fasting has been prescribed for you, just as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard yourselves against evil.' (2: 183)

Ramazan teaches the believer to uphold truth and refrain from evil and falsehood.

It is important, therefore, to reflect upon the Prophet's admonition to believers: 'God does not need the fast of one who does not leave off falsity in speaking or who acts according to his false assertions.'

In the *Hadith*, Ramazan is called the "month of patience". The prescribed abstemiousness of this month is designed to train the individual to control all negative feelings, so that he may lead a successful life in this world, for it is negative feelings that place the greatest hurdle in the path of human progress. By the mere observance of a fast, he becomes conditioned to leading a life of moral restraint. As a reassurance to believers, the Quran says: 'Those who persevere patiently will be requited without measure.' (39: 10)

*The prescribed abstemiousness of this month is designed to train the individual to control all negative feelings, so that he may lead a successful life in this world, for it is negative feelings that place the greatest hurdle in the path of human progress.*

According to the Prophet, 'Whenever one of you is on a fast, he should be soft in his demeanour. In the event of being abused or provoked, he should simply say that he is on a fast.'

According to another tradition of the Prophet, 'There is purification for all things, and purification of the body is fasting.' Just as bathing purifies the body, so does fasting purify the soul. But it must be borne in mind that Ramazan entails much more than fasting; it is the fostering of a culture of abstinence aimed at purification of thought, speech and general behaviour.

Two things make up a human being—body and soul. While the material part of a person, the body, is indispensable for the performance of mundane tasks, it is his soul which will raise him to higher realities. The mind, or soul, must be preserved in a state of purity. Just as the body requires physical nourishment, so also must the soul be spiritually nourished.

***Just as the body  
requires physical  
nourishment, so also  
must the soul be  
spiritually nourished.***

Fasting entails cutting oneself off from the world and turning to God; not in a physical sense, but having one's heart and mind continually directed towards God, whatever bodily activity one may be engaged in. When a person has elevated himself from the world, God endows him with wisdom, which

emanates from his lips. He is shown the ills of the world, and their remedies. He is brought safely to the abode of peace.

The '*Lailatal-Qadr*' (the Night of Destiny) is an important juncture in the last ten days which bring the period of fasting to a close. On this night, angels descend to earth, carrying the commands of God for the coming year. Believers then pray all night, and according to the Quran, praying on this night is better than praying for a thousand months. This night brings wisdom to the human soul. □



## ***Reform through fasting***

*Fasting fosters a culture of restraint aimed at purifying thought, speech and general behaviour.*

# SECRET OF HAPPINESS

## *A Journey*

Margaret Lee Runbeck (1905-1956), American author, teacher and humanitarian has said:

*Happiness is not a state you arrive at,  
but a manner of travelling.*

**E**VERY man desires happiness, but nobody gets real happiness in this world. This world was not created for man to build his castle of happiness in it. The one who believes it to be his goal in life will never find it. It is only for the one who can learn to be happy without happiness.

Were man to discover that sorrow is inevitable in life he will learn to live with sorrow. If he experiences suffering or wrongdoing, he will not complain or mourn, instead he will imbibe valuable lessons from the experience. If his hopes and desires are dashed, he is not depressed. Instead the experience gives him the maturity to acknowledge that in this world there is no one whose every desire is fulfilled, whether rich or poor, king or subject.

If something is to be gained by success and happiness then much can be achieved with failure and sorrow as well. The experience of failure and sorrow makes a man sincere. They turn one into a serious thinker capable of grasping new lessons about life. Sorrow and failure change one's personality creating a new and stronger person. If there was only success and happiness in the world then the world would only be a burial ground of weak and insensitive people. It is only sorrow and failure that make for strong and courageous individuals in this world.

*The one who believes happiness to be his goal in life will never find it. Happiness is only for the one who can learn to be happy without happiness.*

The troubles of the world act like the furnace required for the purification of ores. Heat from the furnace purifies and extracts pure forms of gold and silver. Likewise, hardship and difficult experiences forge the personality of an individual. They turn a dull and lifeless person into a shining personality. □

# HISTORY OF WITHOUTS

## *Barriers to Spirituality*

**T**HE proponents of the theory of evolution believe that the history of life on earth goes back millions of years. But historical records however indicate that the age of man on earth dates back hardly to 25,000 years. Looked at from the historical point of view, we find a great difference between the material and intellectual aspects of human life. That is, man has made tremendous progress in the material aspect of his life. However, even after tens of thousands of years man's knowledge has failed to match the material progress. Man's dream of material progress has largely been realized, but no worthwhile advances have been made in his intellectual and spiritual life. This issue has been dealt with by Dr. Alexis Carrel, in his book, *Man, the Unknown*, published in 1935.

The truth is that a guideline is essential for progress.

So far as the material or physical world is concerned, it contains a guideline within itself. This guideline, or the law of nature, can be discovered by experiment and the desired journey of progress can be continued.

***Man is constantly conditioned from birth by society. This conditioning becomes an obstacle to forming objective opinions.***

For instance, in the field of transport, in ancient times man used to travel on horses and camels. Then he made wheel carts; and later, he built ships, bicycles, motorcars, aircraft and rockets. For the making of all these vehicles, the guideline or laws of nature which were required, existed in the very materials used for this manufacture.

But man, still remains an unknown entity. For instance, man is constantly conditioned from birth, by society. This conditioning becomes an obstacle to man's forming objective opinions. But this truth that man's mind becomes conditioned was ascertained as late as the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that too only to a limited extent. Much on this subject still remained undiscovered. For instance, the fact that the conditioned mind could be 'deconditioned' and brought back to its natural state was unknown.

The Quran being a book of God, its actual role is to provide trustworthy guidelines for man. This human need is alluded to in the Quran in the following verse:

There are some who dispute about God without having any knowledge or guidance, or any enlightening Book. (22: 8)

This verse tells us that the reason for the failure in human science is people's failure to understand human life. They have tried to build the whole framework of existence without guidelines. This is the sole reason for human science not being developed. For, in the absence of guidelines, man will fail to find the starting point for his actions. And such a journey, can never reach its destination.

### **Unawareness of the Creation Plan of God**

Only the engineer of a complex machine can provide a manual for its proper functioning. The same is true of our world. The present world has been built by God in accordance with a creation plan. Man needs to understand this creation plan for the proper construction of his life.

Any concept developed without understanding the creation plan of the Creator will go awry and will not be in accordance with the actual state of affairs. And any plan which goes against reality is destined to fail.

We learn from the Book of God, that God has built this world for the purpose of putting man to the test. Here, man's relationship with this world is akin to that of a student in an examination hall. A student comes to the examination hall so that he may take the requisite test and prove his ability to deserve a place in the world outside the examination hall.

*The Quran being a book of God, its actual role is to provide trustworthy guidelines for man.*

Similarly, this world is a place to take the divine test. Man has to qualify in this test to deserve God's eternal rewards in the world after death.

Man must learn the creation plan of God from His Divine Book—the Quran—and build his life by following the guidelines set forth therein. Those who do so will be successful and those who fail to do so will be adjudged as failures.

### **The Building of an Ideal Life**

The famous Greek Philosopher, Plato, was born about 2500 years ago in Greece. His goal was to form an 'ideal state' in Greece. He presented a model of this state in his book, *The Republic*. He thought that the building of an ideal state was fully possible. Plato, being a teacher of

the royal family, found an opportunity to train and educate the princes to play the desired political role in this Ideal State. He called them 'philosopher kings'. But this supposed ideal state, conceived by Plato, could never come into existence.

This was not because his pupil, Alexander the Great, did not follow him in the latter stage of his life, but was rather due to his ignorance of the creation plan in which God had not envisaged an ideal state. The plan, therefore, which Plato wanted to implement was impracticable. That was why he failed utterly and miserably. If he had fully understood God's creation plan, and had tried to carry into effect some practicable plan, he would certainly have succeeded.

### **Intellectual Activity without Deconditioning**

The Prophet of Islam once observed: 'Every child is born in its real nature then his parents make him into a Jew or a Christian or a Zoroastrian.'

The above words of the *Hadith* are symbolic words for explaining that, each individual is a product of his own environment. This fact has now been proved by scientific research. It has been academically, established that the environment in which human beings find themselves, conditions their minds. No one is an exception to this principle. Unconscious of what is happening, people are involuntarily subjected to a process of incessant conditioning.

*Any concept developed without understanding the creation plan of the Creator will go awry and will not be in accordance with the actual state of affairs.*

This matter of conditioning came into prominence in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The American psychologist, Prof. J.D. Watson, after in-depth research on this subject, published his widely acclaimed book, *Behaviorism*. His thesis was that everyone necessarily undergoes conditioning. No one can escape it. This theory of Watson became so popular that for a long period of time, this formed a part of the psychology

syllabus in many universities. But, in Watson's concept, there was a grave shortcoming. According to his theory, the formation of the human personality is not carved out by nature, but can be nurtured, and one who is conditioned in a particular way retains that personality permanently. He cannot revert to his original nature.

Although the above theory was propounded only at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has dominated the thoughts of people throughout

human history. Human beings remained oblivious to the fact that the beginning of the intellectual process is the 'deconditioning of conditioned minds'. They failed to realize that they can remove their artificial veils and return to their original, pristine nature. The Creator has provided a material example of this matter in the form of an onion. The onion, in the symbolic language of nature, counsels man to remove the external layers from his mind, and only then can he understand things in their original form.

But man neither learnt the lesson from the onion, nor could Professor Watson and his supporters discover this reality. As a result, human beings throughout their entire history have remained ignorant of this reality.

History shows that all political and non-political movements have been the result of some reaction or another; For instance Rousseau reacted against monarchy, Marx against the capitalist system. Jamaluddin Afghani rose against western colonialism and Gandhi against British rule. Ayatullah Khomeini led a movement against the Shah of Iran, and Syed Qutub against Zionism, etc.

It is a fact that a reactionary movement is always the result of a negative mentality. Man develops a hatred for someone and then launches a movement against him. This is the entire story of human history. All human beings have lived in one way or the other in a state of hatred; they have failed to live in a positive state. The reason is that they have remained unaware of conditioning. They have failed to understand that without deconditioning their minds, they cannot see the facts in an 'as it is' form, which is the first condition of positive thinking.

*Man must learn the creation plan of God from His Divine Book—the Quran—and build his life in accordance with the guidelines set forth therein.*

### **Spirituality without Intellectual Revolution**

Spirituality has always been a subject of interest for man. It is known by different names in different circles, for instance, mysticism, meditation, Sufism, etc. For the last several thousand years great activities have been continuing on the spiritual front. But so far, these activities have not yielded any real benefit, in spite of every effort. What man has achieved is only ecstasy at the unconscious level, instead of spiritual development, which was the actual goal of these activities.

For ages people have believed that the human mind is the centre of

thinking, while the human heart is the centre of feelings and emotions. That is why man has always believed in heart-based spirituality. Hence, a spiritual philosophy has been formed on the basis of this supposition. The belief has developed that the human heart is a source of spirituality and, by awakening this latent source in the heart, spirituality can be attained.

Scientific research has proven this supposition to be baseless. The only centre of both thoughts and feelings is the human mind. So far as the heart is concerned, it is merely a means of the circulation of the blood and nothing more. This is the reason why, despite spiritual exercises for the last several thousand years man has gained nothing but ecstasy—far from intellectual development—on the basis of what he conceives to be spirituality.

***The beginning of the intellectual process is the 'deconditioning of conditioned minds'.***

This kind of spirituality, in fact, is limited in its form, and is not spiritual development in the real sense of the word.

As we know, ecstasy is only a pleasant but undefinable feeling, while the greatest quality of man is the capacity to think. All developments in human history have been achieved by employing this thinking faculty. This being so, if spirituality has an existence, it should also be attained at the level of the mind. The source of all human progress lies in the intellectual faculty of the human mind. Similarly, the ways and means of spiritual development should also lie in intellectual activity.

Spirituality is in fact, a high level of the realization of truth. It has nothing to do with any vague type of ecstasy. That is why real spirituality can only be one which is achieved at the level of the mind, and not at the level of the heart.

Due to the ignorance of this reality, man has failed to achieve real spirituality throughout human history. What he took for spirituality was something else. And because of the ignorance of true spirituality, he could not begin his journey towards it. Perhaps there is no tragedy greater than this in the entire gamut of human history. □



# DISCOVERY, REDISCOVERY

## True Faith

*When God made a covenant with the prophets, He said, "Here is the Book and the wisdom which I have given you. When there comes to you a messenger fulfilling that [predictions about him in their Scripture] which is with you, you must believe in him and help him. Do you then affirm this and accept the responsibility I have laid upon you in these terms?" They said, "We will affirm it." God said, "Then bear witness, and I will bear witness with you." (THE QURAN 3: 81)*

**T**HIS verse from the Quran indicates that faith is required at the level of discovery. The contemporaries of the prophets who believe in him are people who enter the fold of religion after discovering the truth in the message of their prophets. But in later periods, the communities (*ummah*) of the prophets follow religion only because they were born into it. God does not require this inherited religiosity. That is why it becomes necessary for people of later generations to discover the truth of their religion, rather than simply believing in it because they have inherited it as such from their forefathers.

For example, in the ancient past it was necessary for the followers of a previous prophet to make a re-discovery of truth through the contemporary prophet. Now, after the seal of prophethood, no new prophet is going to come, but the above-mentioned law will remain intact. In later periods, it will not be enough for Muslims to simply be following the religion they have received as inheritance. Members of the Muslim community will have to once again discover the truth at a conscious level. They must study, ponder and reflect so that they can rediscover the truth of God's religion. Anything less than this will not be acceptable to God.

***People of later generations must discover the truth of their religion, rather than simply believing in it because they have inherited it as such from their forefathers.***

In the age following the Prophet of Islam, other people have to discover God's religion, while believers need to rediscover it. □



# NEGATIVE THINKING IS UN-ISLAMIC

*Look Within*

**O**NE community develops negativity against another when it holds the other community responsible for one or more of its troubles. But there is absolutely no license for such negative thinking in Islam. This is because God has categorically declared in the Quran that,



Whatever misfortune befalls you is due to your own doing. (42: 30)

Therefore, according to Islam whenever any trouble comes upon you, the only thing you must do is introspect to discover the fault within yourself which is the real cause of your troubles. Only then can you take corrective action. On the other hand, holding others responsible for your troubles and engaging in hostility and enmity against them is clearly forbidden in Islam.

This reality is also evident in many of the *Hadith* sayings of the Prophet of Islam. According to one *Hadith*, 'You will never overcome your opponents unless and until you follow my practice. And if you leave my practice, God will let such people overpower you who will neither fear you nor have any sympathy for you, until and unless you return again to my practice.' (*Sahih Muslim*)

***Holding others responsible for your troubles and engaging in hostility and enmity against them is clearly forbidden in Islam.***

Another fact we learn from the Quran is that enmity with others is created as a result of the faults of the believers themselves. External matters have no part to play in the existence of an enemy. One verse of the Quran says, '*..If you persevere with patience and fear God, their plots (conspiracies) will never harm you in the least..*' (3: 120). From this verse we learn that the real issue for the believers is not the presence of plots and conspiracies, but the absence of

patience and piety. Were the believers to adhere to the path of patience and piety, they would be entirely safeguarded from the conspiracies of their enemies. No harm would ever transpire on them due to the actions of others.

There are clear practical examples of this principle in the Quran. One example is that of the Battle of Uhud which took place in the third year

after the *Hijrath* (migration to Madinah). The believers suffered a severe defeat in this battle. This battle was clearly due to the oppression of the opponents of the Prophet of Islam. One obvious evidence of this fact was that the battle occurred near Mount Uhud which was on the outskirts of Madinah. The enemy forces had come from Makkah—300 miles away—to Madinah to attack the Muslims. However, when the Quran refers to the matter, there is no mention of the oppression and plots of the enemies, rather it says that the Muslims had to suffer this severe loss due to their own internal failings.

***Were the believers to adhere to the path of patience and piety, they would be entirely safeguarded from the conspiracies of their enemies.***

With reference to the Battle of Uhud in the third chapter, the Quran says, '*...when your courage failed you and you disagreed among yourselves [concerning the Prophet's direction]...*'. (3: 152). This verse is a clear lesson to the Muslims that they were not to lay the blame of their defeat in the battle on others. They were to hold themselves responsible for it and then make amends to rectify their faults. □



### ***Abstain from evil***

*Apparently, fasting means to abstain from food and drink but in spirit, it includes abstaining from all kinds of undesirable activities.*

# LAMENTING OVER THE PAST

## *No Regrets*

**A**N American psychologist once observed that the activity on which man wastes more time than on anything else is having regrets. People's energies are dissipated in recalling and mulling over bitter memories of the past and in bewailing the fact that they acted in one way and not another, or that friends, neighbours and relatives had been remiss in their actions and attitudes towards them. The businessman thinks, "If I had invested in project B instead of project A, I would not have incurred these losses." The young woman sighs, "If I had married X instead of Y, I'd be a much happier person today." The elderly couple think, "If we had started paying up instalments on a house instead of just renting one, we would now be the owners of a house." And so on, ad infinitum.

***Bitter memories can be converted by positive thinking, into useful experiences—precious lessons for the future.***

To entertain such thoughts is a sheer waste of time and energy. The moment we have such thoughts, we should consider whether any remedy is possible at this stage, if something constructive can still be done,—relations improved, an entirely new situation contemplated, etc., and if the answer to these questions is "No, things are now beyond repair," then one should simply dismiss these distressing ideas from one's mind and turn to

new avenues of thought. It is better to say, "I'll do better next time," or "I'll consider things in greater depth before taking my decision in future," or "I shall myself see to it that relations are never allowed to deteriorate." This is a more positive approach to take where there is some possibility of similar opportunities or situations recurring and it certainly keeps one emotionally more stable and mentally healthy to tackle things in this way. In situations where there are no possibilities of second chances, it is better to resign oneself to things as they are and to view things in as detached a way as possible.

The material gain from such an approach is the saving of time and energy which would otherwise be wasted by wallowing in self-pity. Bitter memories can be converted, by positive thinking, into useful experiences—precious lessons for the future.

It should be appreciated too, that remaining constantly apprehensive about the future is just as bad as lamenting over the past, and no sound future can be built by adopting such a fearful and negative attitude. □

# TOWARDS GLOBAL PEACE

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



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## THE RELIGION OF PEACE

**O**VER the centuries, much has been written about pacifism. It still remains the subject of much debate and scholarship. Pacifism, or the love of peace or the religion of peace, is a movement that is several centuries old. It aims at completely ending war so that human societies may live in peace. One can discern stirrings of pacifism in almost all periods of human history. These stirrings have taken different forms—sometimes being expressed in religious idiom, at other times, being articulated in terms of philosophy or ethics.

Among pacifists there are some who desire peace for its own sake. They define peace as the absence of war. Other pacifists insist that peace must go hand-in-hand with justice. They consider the two to be inseparable. According to them, peace without justice is a negative peace, while peace with justice is a positive peace.

There is no doubt that peace is the most desirable of desirable things, because for any constructive or positive work, peace in society is indispensable. Without peace no progress of any sort is possible. Peace can come about only through freedom, not through coercion. Coerced peace is a form of oppression, not true peace. Genuine peace is one that emerges from intellectual revolution. The Romans, for instance, had established peace in their Empire in a limited sense, which they called Pax Romana. In the same way, there appeared to be some sort of peace in the erstwhile

***For any constructive or positive work, peace in society is indispensable. Without peace no progress of any sort is possible.***

Soviet Union in the 20<sup>th</sup> century—at least this is what the Communists called ‘peace’. But both this Communist ‘peace’ and the ‘peace’ of Pax Romana were forms of ‘coerced peace’. Needless to say, such ‘peace’ is not desirable.

Some thinkers dream of a single world state in order to establish peace. But history testifies that it has never been possible to translate this dream into reality. The fact is that a peaceful society can be brought into being through the mental training of—and intellectual revolution in—individuals and not through dreaming about a state that controls the whole world.

It is generally thought that religion is not of much importance in establishing peace. Some people even claim that never in history has peace been established through religion. They insist that efforts to establish lasting peace through religious sanctions have had little effect.

This interpretation of history is not right. The fact is that this perception is based on faulty analysis. When these people think about the question of peace-building, Islam does not figure in their list. That is why they come to their conclusion on the basis of their study of religions other than Islam. This is because of the widespread misconception that Islam is a religion of violence. The reality, however, is that Islam is in the full sense of the word a religion of peace.

***Peace can come about only through freedom, not through coercion. Coerced peace is a form of oppression, not true peace. Genuine peace is one that emerges from intellectual revolution.***

Islam here refers to the early period of Islam, which should be the basis for understanding Islam as it really is. In this period, two major developments occurred under the influence of Islam. First, the ending of obstacles to peace. And second, the establishment both ideologically and practically, of a complete model of peace.

It is true that in the early period of Islam some battles were indeed fought. But the aim of these battles was precisely what is indicated by the phrase “The last war, to end all wars”.

The Prophet of Islam was born in 570 CE in Makkah. He passed away in 632 CE in Madinah. This was a time when much of the world was under monarchical rule. This system had been in existence for centuries. It had completely eliminated human freedom. The will of the monarch alone counted for everything.

To establish freedom and peace it was necessary to end this coercive system. The Prophet and his Companions engaged in war for a limited period so that this system could be ended. It was first brought to an end in Arabia. After this, the early Muslims were confronted by two major empires of the time, the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanid Empire. The Muslims were victorious over both the empires, which brought an end to the coercive rule that held sway in a large part of the world. The French historian Henri Pirenne asserts that, had the followers of Islam not put an end to this system of what he terms 'Absolute Imperialism', it would never have been possible for the age of freedom and peace to dawn in the world.

After this, history began moving in a particular direction. The process that started with Islam in the seventh century then carried on, reaching its culmination in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Thereafter, it became impossible for the old-style coercive system to be re-established in the world. This is no mere coincidence. The fact is that because of the developments in the last two centuries, the world has witnessed enormous changes that block the possibilities of old style empires being established anywhere. The factors that allow for such empires to be established now simply no longer exist.

One can cite several examples of deterrents that oppose the establishment of political empires in the modern world.

In the ancient past, when a monarch captured, through force of arms, a certain territory, the inhabitants of that territory accepted his sovereignty, considering this to be the conqueror's right. This is why in those days, only a monarch, and not commoners, could defeat another monarch. But in today's world, thanks to democracy, political freedom and the concept of national government, public opinion has changed so much that no external conqueror can gain the wide social acceptance that is necessary to establish rule.

In the past, the economy was based wholly on land, and land was considered the personal property of the king. But today, the Industrial revolution has given birth to innumerable economic resources that everyone can access. And so, it has become possible for 'ordinary'

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people to acquire independent economic means outside the domain of governmental control. This economic transformation has, in turn, made the possibility of governmental coercion even less possible.

Likewise, today there is something that can be called a 'media deterrent'. In modern times, the development of media and communications has made it possible for news about a local happening to be broadcast almost immediately across the rest of the world, so that people everywhere can come to know about it. This is a massive check that has made it virtually impossible to resuscitate the old-style political empires. Now, no emperor can do whatever he likes without fear of censure, unlike before.

In the same way, today we have what can be called a 'universal deterrent' in the form of the United Nations, Amnesty International and numerous human rights groups. No ruler can afford to turn a blind eye to them or to act against them for too long.

***Relying only on peaceful means throughout, one can now reach the pinnacle of success. The violent method has now become an anachronism. It is contrary to the spirit of the age.***

Following these momentous changes at the global level, human history entered a new phase. Now the peaceful method has gained the status of being a completely successful method. Now, using this method alone, from start to finish, one can carry out efforts for any goal without needing to use violence at any stage. Relying only on peaceful means throughout, one can now reach the pinnacle of success. The fact is that the violent method has now become an anachronism. It is contrary to the spirit of the age.

All the changes of the present times are in favour of Islam, and it is one of the results of the revolution created by Islam itself. This happened so that opportunities for conveying the peaceful message could be opened up to the utmost extent. The followers of Islam now have no need to enter into any confrontation and by adopting peaceful methods they can convey the message. □



# ELIMINATE BAD HABITS

*Forsake Falsehood to Discover Truth*

**T**HE creed of Islam is "*La ilaha illa Allah*", "there is no god but Allah". This creed first holds a negation and is then followed by an affirmation. Without a negation of falsehood one can not hold and declare Allah as God. Both these aspects are an integral part of the creed of *tawheed* in Islam. They cannot be separated from one another.

This is a law of nature. It is an abiding law of nature that only after relinquishing something will one be able to acquire something else. In this world created by God, a person will be able to realize a matter of truth only when he has forsaken matters of falsehood. Desiring the truth without renouncing falsehood is only wishful thinking, as in reality such contradictory concepts cannot simultaneously exist in one person.

One who is a seeker of truth must acknowledge this law of nature. For example, many people make bad habits a part of their life. These habits can be of various types, such as frivolous talk, smoking and drinking, wasteful expenditure, ostentatious display, useless entertainment, jokes and amusement, idle banter, cultural formalities and the meaningless pomp and show in gifting and return gifting.

There are many other such habits that people indulge in. Such people suffer two crucial losses at the same time with these habits.

These habits weaken the personality. They deprive a person of superior disposition. Secondly these habits squander a large part of a person's time and talents leaving one incapable of any serious work. The truth is that bad habits are killer habits. They displace man from the human pedestal reducing him to the level of animals. □

***A person will be able to realize a matter of truth only when he has forsaken matters of falsehood. Desiring the truth without renouncing falsehood is only wishful thinking, as in reality such contradictory concepts cannot simultaneously exist in one person.***



# SUCCESSFUL LIFE, UNSUCCESSFUL END

*Lessons from Super Achievers*

**T**HERE was a man in a western country who believed that wealth could give him all the happiness he desired. He accumulated a huge amount of wealth. He built a palatial house for himself. He accumulated all kinds of comforts and luxuries around him but, even then, he failed to find real happiness. Then he grew old and became weak and bed-ridden. In his last days, he wrote these words in his diary:

*Now, I am 90 plus and bedridden. My story can be summed up in these two words—successful life, unsuccessful end.*

This is the story of all those people who are known as achievers or super-achievers. Achievers of great successes, they find little happiness in this world. Finally, they are destined to leave the world in frustration. This is so common that very few people are exceptions to this rule.

***People devote their entire lives to achieving a life of happiness, without realizing that they have been pursuing something which was not achievable at all in this world.***

One of these super-achievers in India is the celebrated singer Lata Mangeshkar. She has now turned 80 and has acquired everything in life that worldly people aspire to—wealth, popularity, fame, great honour, etc. She has had the opportunity to shop at international malls, possess plenty of jewellery and has all that a person could desire. But, having reached this stage of her life, she feels she has not found what she wanted in life. The English daily, *The Times of India (New Delhi)*, September 30, 2007 published an interview with Sudheshna Chatterjee, in which we learn that Lata Mangeshkar, despite all apparent

successes, lives in a state of dejection. This interview was published in the supplement, *Times Life* under this heading: *“My dreams have never got fulfilled.”*

The interviewer asked Lata Mangeshkar what her answer would be if God asked her what was her greatest desire at this last stage in her life. Without any hesitation, she replied, “I would like to leave this world.”

The unsuccessful stories of successful people have a great lesson for every one. The lesson is that people devote their entire lives to

achieving a life of happiness, without realizing that they have been pursuing something which was not achievable at all in this world.

Having desires, but not having a life of fulfillment of these desires points towards a great reality. The reality is that whatever man wants to achieve in the temporary pre-death period, the Creator of the universe has placed it in the eternal post-death period.

In such a situation wisdom lies in making ourselves deserving of success in the world Hereafter. For this, man should devote himself to the preparation of the eternal life of the Hereafter which will come after this temporary period on earth. He should not endeavour to fulfill his desires in this world itself.

Man is an idealist by birth but, in the present world, everything is less than ideal. This is the actual reason for a life of tension. Whatever man achieves—having exerted himself to the full—is always less than his desired standard. Therefore, he becomes stressed.

Therefore, having a foreknowledge of the place of the fulfillment of one's desires is a matter of necessity. One who has this foreknowledge will plan his actions realistically and will then be able to reach his destination. Such a person will never live in a state of tension. □

***The reality is that whatever man wants to achieve in the temporary pre-death period, the Creator of the universe has placed it in the eternal post-death period.***



## ***Faith and Reason***

*It is reason which transforms  
blind faith into a matter of  
intellectual choice.*

# 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*



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## BELIEF IN GOD

**O**NE manner of seeing a tiger is in the museum as a dead, stuffed tiger. The other tiger is the one that you see in the jungle. The tiger in the museum is only the skin of a dead tiger that has been prepared, stuffed with cotton and mounted for display. It only appears to be a tiger, but is not the real animal. People only see this museum tiger for entertainment or for study. Nobody would feel the need to fear or run from such a tiger.

But the tiger in the jungle is a live tiger. It is a symbol of boundless power and majesty. When the tiger walks in the jungle, all other creatures stand in awe. When the tiger roars, the animals fall down in terror. Anyone who sees a live tiger in the jungle would tremble from head to toe losing all sense of awareness except fear. A person witnessing such a sight would not be anything like he was, before seeing the tiger.

This example can be used to understand the matter of belief in God. Belief in God also can be of two types. One is a traditional belief in God. The other is a conscious, live belief in God.

A traditional belief in God is a lifeless belief. Such a belief does not move the soul of man. It does not cause any tremor in the personality. It does not create any palpitation in the heart. In a traditional belief in

God, there is an admission of God, but there is no fear of God.

On the other hand, a conscious belief in God is a completely different matter. A conscious belief in God arises from discovering God and all His powers. One who discovers God in such a manner cannot remain like he was before finding God. After discovering God, his whole personality is shaken. His very soul is stirred with the intensity of fear. All other matters vanish from his mind leaving him concerned with only the issue of God.

***A conscious belief in God and the fear of God are two integral concepts. You cannot separate the fear of God from a conscious belief in God.***

A conscious belief in God and the fear of God are two integral concepts. You cannot separate the fear of God from a conscious belief in God. Where these two have been disconnected, then know that it is not a conscious belief in God but only a traditional belief, and a traditional belief in God is of no value. □



## ***Importance of Education***

*Education makes man a right thinker and a correct decision-maker. It achieves this by bringing him knowledge from the external world, teaching him to reason, and acquainting him with past history, so that he may be a better judge of the present. Without education, man, as it were, is shut up in a windowless room. With education he finds himself in a room with all its windows open to the outside world.*

# GOD, THE GREATEST

## *Manifestations in the Universe*

**T**HE distinguished British mathematician, Sir Michael Francis Atiyah, has said that God is a mathematician. Likewise, Nobel Prize winning physicist, Paul Dirac has said, 'God is a mathematician of a very high order.' This idea is not new. Over fifty years ago, English physicist and mathematician, Sir James Jeans suggested that the universe was handiwork of a mathematician. Centuries before him Pythagoras said that all things are numbers. To Picasso, God was an artist. 'God is really another artist,' he said. 'He invented the giraffe, the elephant and the cat.' Einstein once said that 'the Lord is subtle and—though not malicious—is very clever.'

*God's might is indeed manifest in a thousand ways, but it is only those who open their minds and hearts to Him who can be truly aware of His blessings.*

One who observes the universe is confronted with the awesome feeling that there is a being greater than himself at work in it. A mathematician comes across such high mathematics as to make him aware of the triviality of his grasp of the subject. 'God is a great mathematician!' he exclaims. To an artist, the art displayed in the universe appears so sublime as to make his art seem worthless and he spontaneously cries out, 'God is the greatest artist!' The wisdom prevailing in the

universe is such as to astonish a genius; he in turn discovers that there is a genius far greater than him at work.

The truth is that God is the greatest mathematician, the greatest artist and the greatest genius. One who fails to find the manifestations of God in the universe is blind, and one who does not believe in God after having seen Him is insensate.

God's might is indeed manifest in a thousand ways, but it is only those who open their minds and hearts to Him who can be truly aware of His blessings. □

### ***Superior Action***

*Peace is not inaction. Rather,  
peace is a superior form of action.*

# WHEN YOU MAKE A MISTAKE

## *Repentance*

**O**NE of the Quranic teachings is *tauba*, which means repentance. When you make a mistake and do *tauba*, the blessing of God will return to you. In the chapter entitled *Al-Tahrim* (Prohibition), the Quran says:

O believers, turn to God in sincere repentance, in the hope that your Lord will forgive you your bad deeds and admit you into gardens watered by running streams. (66: 8)

In this verse the Quran declares that after engaging in genuine repentance, one who has erred will be unburdened of the effect of his bad deeds. What is most important about this is that the wrong-doer will be granted forgiveness by God and will consequently be rewarded with Paradise in the Hereafter. This divine blessing is not confined to the next world; in the extended sense, it also includes the present world. Family life and social life will also be blessed with the fruits of *tauba*.

If you make a mistake that arouses anger in another, but then you repent and say: "Please forgive me, I was wrong", this will certainly cause the aggrieved person to have a change of heart. Such an apology will, on the one hand, inculcate positivity in your soul and on the other, it will promote the culture of love among the people you are living with.

In family life as well as social life, untoward events are unavoidable. Such happenings sour relations and create a distance between people. The best solution is *tauba*. Don't wait for others to take the lead. It is for you to come forward and say without hesitation: "I'm sorry, I was wrong." This is the only way of maintaining normalcy among relatives, friends, acquaintances and even strangers.

Problems in social life invariably arise from some kind of wrong behaviour. In reality, men are by nature egoists and women are emotional. The simple solution to having a tranquil social life is not to ruffle the ego of a man and not to neglect a woman's emotions. There is no social ill that cannot be set right by this two-point formula. But it must also be accepted that to err is human, so whenever you

***One of the Quranic teachings is tauba, which means repentance. When you make a mistake and do tauba, the blessing of God will return to you.***

err and some one becomes negative towards you, do not hesitate but at once admit your mistake and say: 'Sorry, I was wrong.' This short sentence will prove to be magical in its effect and the whole situation will instantly be normalised. This is the miracle of *tauba*.

*Tauba* is an instrument of self-correction, initiating a process of self-reassessment. This process is vital, as it enhances your intellectual calibre and increases your capacity for analysis. This, in turn, leads to spiritual development.

People have no difficulty in saying: "O God, forgive me." But when it comes to a human problem, they are reluctant to say: "O brother, please forgive me." This kind of hesitation is against the spirit of faith. A true man of faith will say to another: "Forgive me," just as easily as he says to God: "O Lord, forgive me." *Tauba* is an inner spirit, a readiness to atone for every kind of mistake. □

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# TAZKIYA—AN ACT OF PREPARATION

## *Purify Yourself*

**I**N the present material world, everyone is in need of some employment. Everyone wants a good job. That is why everyone prepares himself professionally to meet the demands of the job market. One who fails to do so will be a failure all his life.

The same is true of the world Hereafter. But its exigencies are of a much more pressing nature. The world Hereafter is a world of divine activity of a very high order. In the world of Hereafter, only that person will succeed who readies himself spiritually in the present world. One who fails to prepare himself appropriately in this world will be a failure in the Hereafter.

All types of success relates to competence. One type of competence works in this world, while another type of competence will avail in the Hereafter. In this world, any source other than God may work but, in the Hereafter, belief in the true God alone will be of any avail. In this world making one's own self one's sole concern is advantageous but, in the Hereafter, it is making God one's sole concern which will be of benefit. In this world, looking at things from the material angle is profitable but, in the Hereafter, only looking at things from the spiritual angle will be of any use. Materialism (interest-based thinking) benefits one in this world but, in the next world, only a man of principle will succeed. In this world dishonesty apparently works, whereas in that other world it is only honesty which will work. In this world, giving importance to immediate interests works but, in the next world, it is only giving importance to other-worldly interests which will be of any avail.

***Tazkiya means preparing oneself with regard to the Hereafter; that is, developing in oneself those qualities which will benefit one in the Hereafter.***

*Tazkiya* means preparing oneself with regard to the Hereafter, that is, developing in oneself those qualities which will benefit one in the Hereafter. The way of *Tazkiya* is to activate one's thinking. One way to do this is to identify such incidents in one's life when one was going to be plunged into some great trouble but was saved by the special succour of God.

It is a must for the seeker of *Tazkiya* to recall such incidents repeatedly in order to refresh the mind of how, when he had reached the very

brink of destruction, was saved by the special intervention of God. He should keep remembering every graphic detail of these incidents and beseech God thus: "O God, you have repeatedly saved me from the horrible consequences of my actions in the life of this world. In the same way, save me from the horrible punishment of hell in the Hereafter."

***"O God, you have repeatedly saved me from the horrible consequences of my actions in the life of this world. In the same way, save me from the horrible punishment of hell in the Hereafter."***

Another approach to this matter is to remember one's shortcomings, mistakes and awaken in oneself a feeling of repentance. If one feels that in any matter one was 99% right and was wrong by only 1%, then on such occasions, one should forget the 99% and exaggerate the 1% to the point where one begins to feel that one was 100% wrong. This will awaken the feeling of repentance. One will shudder in the fear of God and will turn to Him in prayer and seek His forgiveness.

There is nothing mysterious about *Tazkiya*. It is a known process, i.e. thinking repeatedly about all aspects of self-purification. *Tazkiya* is always the result of an intellectual awakening, rather than the result of some mysterious miracle. The more one thinks about this matter, the more one will be able to attain a state of self-purification. *Tazkiya* is a conscious process in the full sense. Hoping to achieve it without undergoing this conscious process is just wishful thinking. It will never become a reality. □



## ***Right of the Country***

*Every individual and every group should believe that the right of the country takes precedence over all other rights.*

# WONDER OF WONDERS

## *Power and Perfection of God*

**L**OOKING at the human body from a purely physical point of view, one finds that it is just made up of water, carbon, oxygen and some other chemical elements. One can even work out, as scientist Robert Pattison has done, the price of material constituents of the human body. According to his calculations their market value is about six and a half US dollars, about four hundred Indian rupees today.

Element	Symbol	Percentage in Body
Oxygen	O	65.0
Carbon	C	18.6
Hydrogen	H	9.5
Nitrogen	N	3.2
Calcium	Ca	1.5
Phosphorous	P	1.0
Potassium	K	0.4
Sulfur	S	0.3
Sodium	Na	0.2
Chlorine	Cl	0.2
Magnesium	Mg	0.1
Trace elements include Boron, Chromium, Cobalt, Copper, Fluorine, Iodine, Iron, Manganese, Molybdenum, Selenium, Silicon, Tin, Vanadium and Zinc	B, Cr, Co, Cu, F, I, Fe, Mn, Mo, Se, Si, Sn, V, Zn	Less than 1.0

Yet out of this four hundred rupees worth of matter, God has created a human being so wonderful that no price can be set upon him. Not even four hundred billion rupees can buy the priceless masterpiece that God has fashioned within the human frame.

One can appreciate the pricelessness of the human body when some part of it is lost. If one loses a hand, for instance, millions of dollars will not buy a new one like it. If one loses one's sight, all the wealth in the world will not win it back. If one's power of speech fails one, there will be no tongue in the shops of the world which will put one's thoughts into words.

How incredible is it that God should fashion something so wonderful out of things of no value. It is only He who can bring the dead to life; only He who has the power to convert insensate matter into conscious life, to make something out of nothing.

***If only man were to truly discover God, he would become totally absorbed in the Lord's wondrous feats of creation.***

***Everything in the world would appear to him as a remarkable sign of God's power and perfection.***

If a magician were to cast a spell on a stone, making it break into speech, everyone would be spellbound at his feat. The feat which God has performed is one of much greater complexity. He has made the inanimate matter that constitutes man's body into a moving, talking, thinking human being. Yet God's feat does not cause people to wonder. How blind are those who can see the skill of a conjurer's magical feats, but not the infinitely greater feats of God's creation! How ignorant are those who rush to become devoted disciples of anyone able to perform false tricks, but are without feelings of any adoration for or attachment to the One who performs truly wondrous acts of creative genius.

If only man were to truly discover God, he would become totally absorbed in the Lord's wondrous feats of creation. Everything in the world would appear to him as a remarkable sign of God's power and perfection. While dwelling in an earthly abode, he would see and feel nothing but the Lord on high. □



### ***Rise above the immediate***

*When your thinking goes beyond your immediate surroundings, you discover the truth that is beyond you.*

# THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT

*Desires Unlimited*

**W**E come into this world with desires. Behind these desires is the sense of enjoyment that is with us since birth. People have all sorts of desires, but we simply cannot fulfil all of them in this world.

Why is it there this contradiction, that while man has unlimited desires, in this world only relatively few of them can or will be fulfilled?

Understanding this contradiction in the human personality can help us properly plan our lives. We must desire only that which—in line with the law of nature—we will get in this world. We must not chase after things that, in line with the law of nature, we are not going to get in this world. Every person ought to understand and realize this. If one does not one will just waste one's time and energy. And will depart from this world without fulfilling the purpose of one's life.

This is the biggest problem of human life. It is also the starting point for the struggle of life. Only someone who ponders deeply on this question, free from biased thinking, can respond to it in the right way. He can see the problem as it is, separate from his own desires.

***We must desire only that which—in line with the law of nature—we will get in this world. We must not chase after things that, in line with the law of nature, we are not going to get in this world.***

To err in this regard can be very costly. It may even result in wasting one's entire life. □



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# PATIENCE: THE SUPERIOR SOLUTION

*Success in this World and the Hereafter*

**P**ATIENCE, the focus of about 200 verses of the Quran, and referred to indirectly in many others, may be termed the core subject of the scriptures. The verses directly relating to patience are quite explicit in their content. For instance,

*And seek (Allah's) help with patience and prayer. (2: 45)*

*And endure patiently whatever may befall you. (31: 17)*

*And exhort one another to be patient. (103: 3)*

*Ignore their hurtful talk. Put your trust in God. (33: 48)*

A very pronounced and direct instruction to behave with patience and endurance is apparent in these verses.

The majority of the other verses are also intensely concerned with patience. The very first verse of the Quran begins with "Praise belongs to God." (*Al-Fatihah*) This shows that God expects mankind to express gratitude and admiration to Him. But this is a very trying expectation! We know that this world is full of unpleasant experiences and nobody can be insulated from them. According to the Quran "Man is born in toil." Indeed, it is not possible for anyone to create a life of absolute bliss for himself.

How then a person can become grateful and appreciative of God's grace in the real sense? The only way to be so is through patience. It is only when a man patiently endures worldly problems that it is possible for him to express his feeling of gratefulness to God. It is for this reason that the Quran associates gratefulness with patience.

Patience makes a person capable of finding a positive and successful solution to any problem. When someone explodes with anger while facing his adversary, he loses the faculty to respond effectively or to think of well-planned action. But when he applies patience and tolerance, he finds himself competent to make a rational move instead of an impulsive reaction. History testifies that one who acts on impulses and emotional reactions, invariably fails; and one who responds rationally, always succeeds.

Patience is undoubtedly the superior solution to all problems. □

# IGNORE THEM POLITELY

## *Conflict Management*

**L**IFE is a series of different kinds of experiences, both good and bad. A good experience, suits us perfectly well, but what should we do when we have some bad experience? The Quran gives us a very simple answer: Avoid any unpleasantness by remaining non-committal.

This principle is set forth in one of the chapters of the Quran. When the Prophet of Islam started his mission in Makkah in 610 CE, the situation was highly unfavourable. Often he faced unwanted situations and at that juncture the following verse was revealed in the Quran:

Bear patiently with what they say, and ignore them politely. (73: 10)

In such a predicament, patience is not a passive attitude; it demonstrates great wisdom. When you keep your patience, you are saving your time and energy. Being patient in a difficult situation means that if you sense that the other person is not in a responsive mood, you should adopt the principle of avoidance, give him an evasive reply and then proceed with your own affairs. It is only if you see that the other person is listening to you in earnest that you should present your point of view to him. This principle is very important in social life. Society is a combination of different kinds of people and the way we live our lives in society is very often determined not by our own choices but by the will of others. If you try to convince all the members of society of your wish to prevail, you will seldom succeed, so practice the art of doing what is possible and leaving what is impossible.

*The mature person remains even-tempered in situations which are impossible for him to change.*

This is a sign of maturity. The mature person remains even-tempered in situations which are impossible for him to change. If it is possible to bring about a change in the situation, then try for change, but when change is not possible, simply adopt the principle of adjustment.

This principle is important not only in society but also in your family. In the domestic sphere, there are always occasions when you feel that you cannot convince other family members of the rectitude of your views. That is when you should follow this attitude: For you, your way of thinking, and for me, mine.

Studies show that differences are a part of life. Each one has a different mindset, sees things from a different angle, and has a different taste. It is almost impossible to bring about uniformity among people. Trying to establish uniformity is like trying to make the impossible possible.

*Being patient in a difficult situation means that if you sense that the other party is not in a responsive mood, you should adopt the principle of avoidance.*

In such a situation, adopting the above Quranic formula, 'Live and Let live', which is based on a practical principle, is the only common sense solution. It means simply that you should live by your own principles and let other people live by their own principles. This is maturity, adjustment and the positive way of life.

Ignore them politely means deal with them in a positive manner. If the questions put to you are of a contentious nature, respond to them in an indirect way or simply change the subject. To change the subject is also a polite

way of answering. This kind of answer shows maturity and a disciplined mind. Moreover, it is the sign of a strong personality. □



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# THE CASE OF PRESENT MUSLIMS

## *Need for a Global Perspective*

**F**ORMER British Prime Minister Tony Blair gave an interview to *The Sunday Times* on March 27. During the interview, he said that “many millions” of Muslims hold a viewpoint that is “fundamentally incompatible with the modern world.” (“Many millions of Muslims ‘fundamentally incompatible with the modern world’, says Tony Blair”, *The Independent*, 27 March 2016). This statement of Mr. Tony Blair may annoy some Muslims, but it is based on fact. Moreover, his remarks, directly or indirectly, apply to perhaps almost all present-day Muslims.

The comment that ‘Muslims are incompatible with the modern age’ is not meant in the sense of the religious beliefs they hold, but relates to their social behaviour. For example, in today’s world, freedom of expression is accepted as an absolute right of every one, provided that one remains strictly within the peaceful domain. However, many Muslims are not ready to concede this right to others. For instance, they are of the opinion that one who, according to their law, engages in an act of apostasy or blasphemy is liable to be punished. Similarly, in the present world, democracy is considered the right form of government, but there are Muslims who reject it claiming that it runs counter to their religion.

The difference between Muslims and the modern world is that Muslims, according to their traditional mindset, believe in absolutism, but the present age is characterized by relativism. This means that for Muslims certain things are absolutely right or absolutely wrong, while modern thought does not agree with this viewpoint and holds that a person has the freedom to adopt whatever he thinks is correct according to him, only if he does not take to violence.

In this respect Muslims’ stand on blasphemy and apostasy should be re-considered. If somebody leaves Islam for another religion, Muslims believe that he should be killed. However, the modern mind regards opting for one religion instead of another as one’s freedom to choose, something which is a person’s inalienable right. In a similar way, if a

***There is a need to differentiate between personal belief and universal norm. A person is free in matters of his personal belief, but when it comes to universal norms, Islam agrees to what has been accepted internationally.***

person passes a derogatory remark about the Prophet Muhammad, it becomes an issue of blasphemy for Muslims, who demand punishment for the blasphemer. But for the person who makes such a statement, it is not an issue of blasphemy, rather one of freedom to express one's opinion. There were many instances during the life of the Prophet of Islam when his opponents issued scornful statements about him, but he did not command his followers to kill them.

The standpoint of Islam in this matter is that there is a need to differentiate between personal belief and universal norm. A person is free in matters of his personal belief, but when it comes to universal norms, Islam agrees to what has been accepted internationally. For example, in the case of the Hudaibiya Peace Treaty, the Prophet agreed to erase the word 'Messenger of God' suffixed to his name as the other party was not ready to accept him as prophet.

This means that in matters of belief, Islam holds that a person can follow idealism, but in matters of international relations Islam advocates the principle of pragmatism.

***In matters of belief, Islam holds that a person can follow idealism, but in matters of international relations Islam advocates the principle of pragmatism.***

According to the dictionary, incompatibility means not capable of existing in agreement or harmony with something else. After the formation of the United Nations, it has been universally agreed upon that disputes should be resolved through peaceful negotiations. Many of the present Muslims, however, are not ready to accept this: their militancy in the name of *jihad* is a clear example of this disagreement. It is important to note that although this could be the way of thinking of present Muslims, it is totally against the spirit of Islam. In the first quarter of the

seventh century, Islam had accepted the principle that disputes should be settled by way of peaceful negotiation. A practical example of this policy can be seen in the Hudaibiya Peace Treaty which was signed between the Prophet and his opponents in 628 CE.

If Muslims adhere to any other policy, it would be regarded as invalid according to Islam. This is why in this matter, it is important for people to judge the Muslim community in the light of Islamic teachings and not vice versa. □

# GOD'S SIGNS

## *Open Your Eyes*

*Surely in the heavens and the earth there are signs for the faithful; in your own creation, and in the beasts that are scattered far and near, are signs for true believers; in the alternation of night and day, in the sustenance God sends down from heaven with which He revives the earth after its death, and in the marshalling of the winds, are signs for men of understanding. (45: 3-5)*

**T**HERE are multiple verses in the Quran which point out that there are signs in the universe for men of understanding. God requires man to believe in certain hidden realities. To make this easier he has set up material symbols of these realities in the outside world. What man has to do is see the reflection of invisible realities in the mirror of visible signs.

The sun and the moon give us a glimpse of God—the source of all light. The birds and the animals provide us with a picture of innocence; as such they are God's representatives on our planet. The sky in its vastness gives us an idea of the might and greatness of God. Wind and water show us the mercy of the One who created them. The trees and the mountains provide a pointer to His exquisite beauty.

If a person opens his mind to the wonders of the world, taking in all that he sees in the universe, then he will find the light of God shining in all that he beholds. He will see the divine wisdom that lies behind every object of creation. The cosmos in all its vastness will serve as a constant reminder of the infinity of God. The earth and the heavens will become manifestations of His splendour; by observing them he will come to know the Lord. □

***If a person opens his mind to the wonders of the world, taking in all that he sees in the universe, then he will find the light of God shining in all that he beholds.***



# THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

## *Single-minded Pursuit of Goals*

**O**N April 12th 1983, a young Indian soldier, Kailash Chand, of the 10<sup>th</sup> Para Commandos, was returning by train to Jodhpur from Pune with other jawans after completing their training.

The 5-Down Ahmedabad-Agra Fort Express was moving at full speed between Jawali and Somesar stations. Kailash Chand was by a window enjoying the breeze when suddenly he saw a jawan falling out of the open door of the next compartment. Momentarily stunned, he lost no time in pulling the chain to halt the train. But as luck would have it the system was inoperative and the train continued to speed along.

Kailash Chand shouted for the guard who was in the next compartment. Unable to attract his attention because of the din of the fast-moving train, he decided that something needs to be done. With utter

***Self-fulfilment  
lies in putting  
aside all thoughts  
about oneself and  
relentlessly pursuing  
one's goal.***

disregard for his own safety, he rushed out of the compartment, grasped the safety bars of the train and inched his way towards the guard's van. With flailing legs, the paratrooper managed to reach after about ten agonizing minutes. The guard brought the train to a halt, but it was for the soldier to convince the engine driver that he should reverse the train six kilometres and pick up the fallen soldier.

The loco-driver pointed out that he could not take the train back without official orders: The jawan insisted that the soldier be picked up first and the consequences faced later. As a result, the seriously injured soldier was picked up and rushed to hospital. His life had been saved.

The Government of India awarded the 'Vishisht Seva' medal for bravery to Paratrooper Kailash Chand. Narrating the sequence of events, he said that while inching his way towards the guard's van, he had been thinking only of the fallen soldier, not his personal safety. All he wanted to do was to stop the train somehow, to save the soldier.

To save the soldier, Kailash Chand had to forget his own safety and after that nothing could stand in his way. Similarly, to succeed in life, one must do what Kailash Chand did. One should put aside all thoughts about oneself and relentlessly pursue one's goal. Personal considerations are what people give importance to but success demands a single-minded pursuit of the goal even if it be at the expense of personal security. □

# AFTER DEATH

## *Life in the Hereafter*

*When death comes upon a person, the day of reckoning starts immediately after death for that person. (Prophet of Islam)*

**T**HIS *Hadith* of the Prophet implies that death is not the end of man's existence, it is a transition from one period of life into another. There is no separation between these two periods of life.

The truth is that human life is a continuum. Death is only a manner of transfer; the departure of man from one world leading to an entrance into another world.

This present world is a place of personality development. Here every person is building their own personality. This personality development can be of two types. A positive personality or a negative personality. Those who develop a positive personality in this world will soon after death find themselves in the gardens of Paradise. And those who develop a negative personality will only find a place in Hell after death. This reality is better explained in another *Hadith* of the Prophet as,

***Death is not the end of man's existence, it is a transition from one period of life into another. There is no separation between these two periods of life.***

'The grave is a garden from amongst the gardens of Paradise or a pit from amongst the pits of Hell.'

This *Hadith* can be understood in the light of another that says, '*It is the deeds of every person that will be returned to that person in the Hereafter.*'

There is no distance between man and his deeds. A man's actions follow his personality wherever he may be. In the present world, the deeds of man are not directly apparent. But immediately after death these deeds will become clear and evident. Man will suddenly find himself surrounded by his deeds. The one who has good deeds will find himself in the midst of good deeds and the one who has done bad deeds in his life will find himself in the midst of these bad deeds. □



# 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**

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***Had God hastened the punishment of men as He hastens the good, the end of their term of life would already have been reached. We leave those who do not hope to meet Us groping along in their arrogance.***

*(10: 11)*

It is the law of God that when an individual performs a praiseworthy deed, it is immediately included in the record of his deeds. But if he commits an act which warrants punishment, God gives him respite so that better counsel should prevail, and he may at some point reform himself. This law of God is a great mercy to human beings; otherwise man is a great transgressor and is always ready to perform evil deeds, and if people were immediately seized upon for their evil deeds, their lives would very soon come to an end and the face of the earth would become devoid of human existence.

Those who lead their lives as if they are not required to face God after death, live with arrogance in this world. They are those who lead their lives free of the fear of God's scourge, thinking that they are at liberty to practice as much deceit and spread as much chaos as they like. The fact is that man should realize that there is one Power over and above all powerful ones—every man is helpless before Him. He will one day seize upon all human beings and everybody will be compelled to accept His verdict.

***Whenever any trouble befalls a person, he prays to Us all the time, lying on his side, sitting or standing; but when We remove his trouble, he goes on his way as if he had never prayed to Us for the removal of his trouble. Thus it is that the doings of the transgressors are made to look fair to them.*** *(10: 12)*

The system of this world is so designed that from time to time man is hit by some calamity or accident. He begins to realize that he is absolutely helpless against external forces. At that time he spontaneously starts calling upon God; he admits his humbleness compared to God's Power. But, he is humble only so long as he is in trouble.

The moment he gets relief from trouble, he becomes as negligent and arrogant as he was earlier. God does not accept the obeisance of such people, because only that obeisance is acceptable which is offered in a free atmosphere. Obeisance offered under the pressure of compelling circumstances has no value in the eyes of God.

Man is a creature who likes justification. He seeks justification for every action of his. If a man chooses to be arrogant, his mentality will be inclined towards that. He will, in practice indulge in arrogance, and his mind will provide him with beautiful words in order to prove his arrogance justified. This is known as *taz'in*. Man expresses his misdeeds in beautiful words and is satisfied that he is in the right. But, this is like a man holding a burning lump of coal in his hand and thinking that it will not burn him simply because he calls it a red flower.

***And indeed, before your time We destroyed [whole] generations when they [persistently] did evil; their messengers came to them with clear signs, but they would not believe. Thus We requite the guilty. (10: 13)***

The prophets addressed their communities with clear arguments, (*baiyinat*), but they did not accept them. This shows that the missionary call—given on behalf of God—rests on the basis of reasoning. People have to recognize the prophet at the level of arguments and reasoning. Those who want to find him basking in outward glories surrounded with huge numbers of supporters will never be able to find him, because he will not be there at all. The prophet does not perform miracles, but engages rather in the process of argument. At the stage of the missionary call, all work is done on this basis. Individuals and groups transgress in not recognizing the Divine call appearing in the form of arguments or reasoning. They reject it, not having found it in accordance with their self-devised standards. Due to this behaviour, such people are punished by the law of God.

The communities of the past which had incurred God's retribution for their rejection of the prophets, were not actually total rejecters of prophethood. All these communities had accepted some prophet or the other of earlier periods, but they rejected the prophet of their own times. In the case of the earlier prophets, the corroborative historical facts had accumulated to back them. They had become objects of

national prestige, and public predilections favoured them, while the contemporary prophet was as yet devoid of all such additional attributes. They recognized that past prophet who had as a result of tradition over the generations, become their national prophet, and connecting with him was synonymous with linking themselves with a tower of greatness. They recognized their national prophet as such, and rejected that prophet who could be recognized only through his reasoning and arguments. In the eyes of God, this was such a serious crime that those who were declared to be rejecters of the prophet were destroyed.

***Then We made you their successors in the land, so that We might observe how you would conduct yourselves. (10: 14)***

'Then We made you their successors (*khala'if*, sing. *khalifah*) in the land.' The real meaning of *khalifah* is 'one who comes afterwards'. This word 'successor' is specially used for coming into power after another. This succession is in relation to human beings and not in relation to God. In the Quran, wherever the word *khilafah* has been used, it is in connection with succession to some creature and not in connection with succession to God. Making somebody a successor is solely for the purpose of putting him to the test and is not meant to confer any honour. Making somebody a successor means giving one an opportunity to work after another; it is placing one community in the arena of testing in place of another community. For example, in India, the native Rajas' were replaced by Mughals. Then they were removed and the Britishers were made their successors. Later, they (the British) were made to leave the country, making way for the majority community. In all these cases, the 'one coming afterwards' was the successor (*khalifah*) of the earlier one.

## ***Upright Nature***

*Man has been created with an upright nature. If no hindrance comes in the way, then every man will, on his own, take the right course. That is why the utmost precaution must be taken against allowing unnatural obstacles to come in the way. Then guided by this upright nature, man will continue to walk along the right path until he meets his Lord.*

## JUSTICE MARKANDEY KATJU'S TESTIMONIAL

### *to Maulana Wahiduddin Khan*

I am a great admirer of Maulana Wahiduddin (born 1925).

Although he had Muslim religious education, he was always secular and preached brotherhood between all communities. He is truly a great man. I have met him on a few occasions.

In 1992, when the atmosphere was highly charged throughout India due to the Babri Mosque incident, he felt the necessity to convince people of the need to restore peace and amity between the two communities, so that the country might once again tread the path of peace.

To fulfil this end, he went on a 15-day *Shanti Yatra* (peace march) through Maharashtra along with Acharya Muni Sushil Kumar and Swami Chidanand, addressing large groups of people at 35 different places from Mumbai to Nagpur. This Shanti Yatra contributed greatly to the return of peace in the country. It is because of his advocacy of peace on the subcontinent and throughout the world and the espousal of the cause of communal harmony that he is respected by all communities and in every circle of society.

Invited to meetings by all religious groups and communities within India and abroad, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is, in effect, India's ambassador of communal amity, spreading the universal message of peace, love and harmony. Directly addressing individuals, he has been re-engineering minds in order to develop positive citizens of the world—who can live together peacefully—so that the culture of peace and brotherhood may be spread at a universal level. Over decades, he has prepared a team of individuals—the Ambassadors of Peace. □

**Markandey Katju**

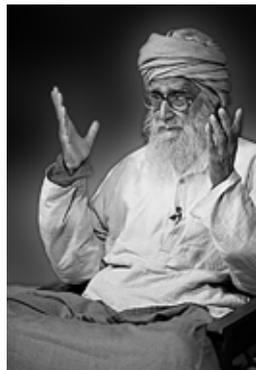


### **Human Society**

*If people do not show reliability and predictability in their character, human society will crumble.*

# ASK MAULANA

*Your Questions Answered*



***Q & A with Maulana Wahiduddin Khan on the election of Sadiq Khan as London's First Muslim Mayor.***

***Sadiq Khan, the son of a bus-driver, has been elected as the Mayor of London, and with a sizeable margin. He is London's first Muslim Mayor. How do you respond to this?***

In his first address as the Mayor of London, Mr. Sadiq Khan said, while expressing his gratitude towards Londoners, that they had made the impossible, possible. In my view, it would be better to say that Londoners had demonstrated to the entire world, and especially to Muslims, what the spirit of this age is—that in today's day and age, sectarian thinking has ended and competence alone holds meaning. If one is able to prove one's competence, one can achieve anything. In this age of globalisation, there is no room for any kind of sectarian thinking. There is only one criterion of success—and that is, competence.

***What do you think Mr. Khan's election can imply in the context of the much talked-about question of relations between Muslims and others, both in the West and globally, more generally?***

The issue of relations is a unilateral one—the rest of the world has adopted the spirit of the age already, and now it is time for Muslims to change their attitude and adopt the spirit of the modern age, too.

***What do you think it means in the context of claims of widespread 'Islamophobia' in the West, and among non-Muslims generally?***

"Islamophobia" is a baseless rumour that Muslims have invented. It exists neither in the West nor anywhere else in the world. This is the age of opportunities, and today every person is busy in availing these opportunities; no one has the time to become enemy to another. Muslims must realize that the victory of Mr. Sadiq Khan completely dispels the notion of "Islamophobia". Muslims must accept that they were under a wrong impression until now while the reality is quite different. It is now the responsibility of Muslims to unilaterally come out of this negative mindset.

***Besides living up to his other responsibilities as mayor of London, what do you think Sadiq Khan could do to improve relations between***

### ***Muslims and others in the UK and the West more generally?***

It is now the turn of Muslims to change their perception towards the West. "Islamophobia" was a self-invented obsession that has no relevance. Muslims have not yet understood the spirit of the modern age, which invites everyone to adopt a "customer-friendly" attitude. It is only a friendly atmosphere that can allow the global economy to thrive, foster goodwill and sustain this era of professional development. In this modern age, no one can potentially remain an enemy to another.

### ***What lessons do you think we can draw from Sadiq Khan's victory in terms of relations between Muslims and people of other faiths?***

Mr. Sadiq Khan's victory should make Muslims realize that they live in a new age. Today's global economy thrives on competition and cooperation and upholds competence as the single most important factor of development. Mr. Sadiq Khan is not a Muslim leader, but the result of his victory has left a lesson much bigger than any other, inviting Muslims to re-think and re-plan their efforts and channelize them in constructive matters.

### ***What lessons do you think can be drawn from Sadiq Khan's victory in terms of political representation of Muslims and minorities?***

In my opinion, the concept of political representation is irrelevant. What is relevant is political competence. In politics, quantity is nothing, it is competence that matters; quantity has only a secondary significance. For example, Jews are a minority community in the United States of America but they outshine others in their spheres of work. This has become possible only because today competence is given supreme importance. The concept of representation emphasizes only on quantity, but in our view life is not a game of quantity. It is quality that matters!

### ***The people of London elected their first Muslim Mayor. What message do you want to convey on the basis of this to Muslims in Muslim-majority countries in terms of how they should treat the minorities living in their midst?***

At present, Muslim countries have adopted a "We-They" concept with respect to non-Muslim minorities. This concept is anachronistic to the modern world. The concept of today's age is "We-We", that is, equal human rights for all. Muslims are free to follow their choice in matters of cultural belief but in social and political affairs they must adopt and practise universal norms. That is, as far as human rights are concerned, there is no difference at all between any human beings. □

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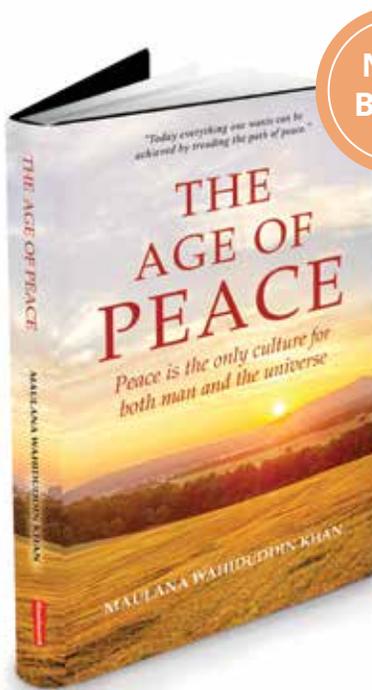
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