

ENGLISH MONTHLY ISSUE 52 APRIL 2017 ₹35

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



The greatest thing for man to target in this world is the nurturing of a noble personality.

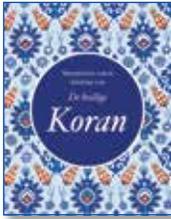
THE QURAN

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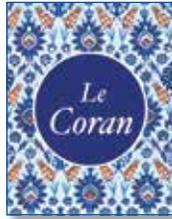
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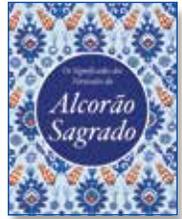
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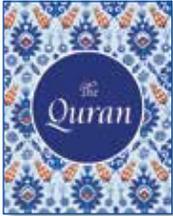
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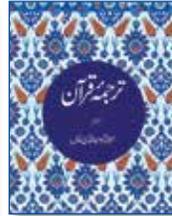
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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

ISSUE 52 APRIL 2017

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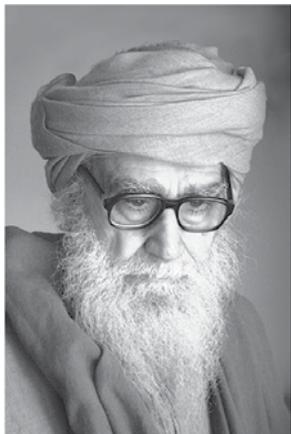
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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

A SANE VOICE FROM AMERICA

AN Australian immigrant to America, Nick Adams, has written a book titled *Green Card Warrior*. An introductory note to this book, which appeared in *The Times of India*, is being quoted here in full:

Millions of immigrants hanker after a permanent residency in the United States, in a tortured pursuit often dubbed the “green card blues”. Now, President Trump has indicated what could be an easy route to it under his watch: show your merit, and possibly, be conservative!

In an unusual plug that comes at a time his aide Kellyanne Conway is still under fire for hawking his daughter’s merchandize from the White House podium, the US President on Friday endorsed on twitter, a book on the green card pursuit. “Nick Adams new book, *Green Card Warrior*, is a must read. The merit-based system is the way to go. Canada, Australia!” Trump wrote, days after he proposed economic criteria for immigration rather than the family-based one that is currently the primary driver.

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

It turns out that Adams is an Australian immigrant who struggled for nearly five years to get a US Green Card, because, he says, he was persecuted by the Obama administration for being a conservative. He writes in the book that he was eventually granted an “extraordinary ability” Green Card by the US, but it wasn’t easy.

“It was a 4.5 year battle, and cost almost fifty thousand dollars. It is an incredible tale of sabotage and juxtaposes the enormous difficulty of legal immigration with the red-carpet welcome of illegal immigration”, he says.

Now a resident of Texas, Adams runs a foundation on “American Greatness” and calls himself a conservative “culture warrior” appearing often on TV shows plugging the Trump line. It was one such appearance on Fox News channel on Friday morning that appears to have caught President Trump’s eye and generated the tweet a few minutes later.

In the show, Adams maintained that “if America is going to remain the best nation on this earth, we’ve got to make sure that we bring only the best people here”.

“There has to be a cultural buy-in from those that decide to make America home. They can’t just come here and milk us. They’ve got to love the place and they got to become American”, he argued.

Incidentally, Government ethics rules barring product endorsements don’t apply to Presidents, so Adams can happily milk the bonanza.

If Muslims, not only in America, but also in every country of the world, qualify on merit they will be surely successful in achieving what they set out for.

(‘Donald Trump endorses book on Green Card pursuit via merit’, The Times of India, 6 March 2017)

The comment made by Nick Adams is appropriately applicable to American Muslims as well. The work culture that developed in America after freedom was completely merit-based. The formula of this culture was ‘compete or perish’. Those who settle in America from outside must know that this principle is considered a sacred creed. Muslim immigrants should also know that they are

not an exception to this rule. They must necessarily stand up to this competition: they cannot prevent themselves from paying this price. No hue or cry can help them in this matter.

If Muslims, not only in America, but also in every country of the world, qualify on merit they will be surely successful in achieving what they set out for. However, if they want to achieve something through favour, they will not be able to attain anything in this world.

Muslims must not become emotional in this matter, rather they should be realistic. They must accept reality. No other strategy will work in this regard.

This method is not only an American formula, but has been laid down by God. It has been mentioned in the Quran in these words: *"He sends down water from the sky that fills riverbeds to overflowing, each according to its measure. The torrent carries along swelling foam, akin to what rises from smelted ore from which man makes ornaments and tools. God thus depicts truth and falsehood. The scum is cast away, but whatever is of use to man remains behind. God thus speaks in parables."* (13: 17)

According to the above verse of the Quran, Muslims must prove themselves a 'giver' community. If they become a 'taker' community, they will not have a respectful place anywhere in the world, in America or any other country. □

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan
editor@thespiritofislam.org



Ego or Conscience

If you challenge someone's ego, your success is doubtful but when you challenge someone's conscience, then your success is guaranteed.

DEFEAT IN ONE ARENA

Victory in Another

IN 827 CE, the Mediterranean island of Sicily became part of the growing Islamic empire. For nearly three hundred years it remained under Islamic rule. Then, in 1070, it was re-conquered by the Normans.

The founder of the Norman kingdom of Sicily was Roger II (1095-1154). In 1110 he succeeded his brother as Count of Sicily and in 1130 was crowned king. Although he belonged to a nation of conquerors, and it was the Muslims whom he had defeated, he still retained a high respect for Arabs and Islam. His coronation mantle was designed by a Muslim artist, and had Arabic inscriptions woven into it. After his coronation, he decided that he would like to have a chart showing the full extent of the Norman empire. He chose a Muslim cartographer, Al-Idrisi, to design this chart, for he was the greatest expert in the field. Al-Idrisi then went on to prepare an atlas for the king, consisting of seventy maps and extensive geographical data. Originally written in Arabic, the first European edition of this atlas was published in 1619.

The solution to the problems of the Muslims in the modern age lies in their cultivating technological capability, and establishing dominance in the field of modern scientific knowledge.

The selection of Al-Idrisi for the mammoth task of preparing maps of the whole of the known world shows, as the historian J.H. Kramers has pointed out, that at that time the intellectual and academic excellence of Muslims was recognized. Roger II certainly appreciated the worth of Muslim scholars: he encouraged and sponsored them in their work and—in the words of one historian—“made Sicily a major meeting place for Christian and Arab scholars”.

Though defeated on the field of battle, Muslims continued their intellectual and academic dominance, even in the court of their conqueror. This was because at that time Muslims were by far and wide an advanced community in different fields of knowledge. The legacy of Islam lives in European languages, which retain many words of Arabic origin.

Muslims today complain of their political, economic and military subjection to non-Muslim nations. They think that they can take back, by protest and militancy, what has been seized from them. But the

case of Roger II of Sicily—his respect for Muslim scholars and their continued intellectual domination even after military defeat—shows that the solution to the problems of the Muslims in the modern age lies in their cultivating technological capability, and establishing dominance in the field of modern scientific knowledge. This can be achieved—not by protests and militant “fundamentalism”, but by earnest academic endeavour alone; it can be acquired by seeking to give to the world, rather than just taking from it. □



Be a Super Achiever

Be ambitious, but not an adventurer.

Be confident, but never lose your modesty.

Be clear about your target, but never try to achieve it at the cost of another person's success or peace of mind. You have to be a good planner, but keep away from any kind of corruption. It is good to be a self-made person but not by usurping other's rights. Always remember that it is not your intention or your desire that determines the course taken by the external world.

It is a wise adjustment between your desires and external realities that leads to success. It is a fact that no one can overrule your ambitions but it is also a fact that you cannot overrule the laws of nature.

So always be a realist.

ALL THE BLOOD OF ONE'S BODY

Total Dedication

PROFESSOR Paul Dirac died in Florida, U.S.A., in October 1984 at the age of 84. Recipient of the Nobel Prize and many other awards, he was considered—after Newton and Einstein—the greatest scientist of modern times. He is known mainly for his development of quantum mechanical theory—in effect the physics of the smallest part of the atom—and his effective prediction of anti-matter before it had been experimentally discovered. His “anti-matter” and “anti-universe” became the leading physical ideas for explaining the character and contents of the contemporary universe, its origin and history. J.G. Crowther’s obituary to Dirac in *The Guardian* (November 4, 1984) was fittingly given the headline “*Prophet of the Anti-universe*”.

Dirac’s discovery of the first anti-particle, known as a positron, revolutionized the world of nuclear physics. Students were naturally interested to know how he arrived at this world-shaking discovery. His answers often proved somewhat disconcerting. “When people asked him how he got his startling ideas about the nature of sub-atomic matter”, Crowther writes, “he would patiently explain that he did so by lying on his study floor with his feet up so that the blood ran to his head”.

Great intellectual feats can only be accomplished by letting all the blood of one’s body run to one’s head—by channeling all of one’s energy into the intellectual pursuit one has undertaken.

Dirac’s answer might appear tongue-in-cheek, but in fact what he said was quite true. Great intellectual feats can only be accomplished by letting all the blood of one’s body run to one’s head—by channeling all of one’s energy into the intellectual pursuit one has undertaken.

Few people actually do this. They rather tend to diversify their efforts. Their failure to concentrate on a single goal renders all their efforts incomplete and ineffective. Every worthwhile task demands all the strength that an individual can muster. The only way to be successful in one’s work is to give it all one has. □



DISCOVER YOURSELF

Pay the Price

OF the several definitions which attempt to define mankind, there is one which is met with more general approbation. That is, man is born with an innate feeling which tells him that he is better than another; better than that intolerant neighbour and that incompetent colleague. This uncanny awareness constitutes one of the first characteristics of man's being. Indeed, the most ordinary thing about each individual is the fact that he considers himself a little extraordinary.

In thinking that we are extraordinary we acknowledge only a portion of the truth. The other half of the truth is the fact that every individual, without exception, is born different, and is therefore unique. This part of the truth we unwittingly choose to ignore.

The intention of this article is not to deal with either the undue pride which the consciousness of this thought sometimes entails or the sad repercussions which its ignorance yields. The urgent, unaddressed question is: Why do most people, if they are born unique, consequently talented in some sense of the word, not achieve the success which they are entitled to?

Man starts dreaming while he is a child. Throughout his life, he strives and struggles to realize his dreams. However, when unable to establish his uniqueness, he sinks low in dejection and disillusionment.

In view of these circumstances, the first step is to understand the role that we can best play. Discovering this uniqueness is the starting point. Explaining the situation of one who is bereft of this self-knowledge, the Prophet Muhammad has said: "The condition of an unwise man is that of an animal who is not aware of why its master has tied it or untied it."

To bring to the surface that talent, that will reveal the measure of your mind, you must work towards developing it with complete dedication and undivided attention.

The answer to the question as to why many fail to actualize the gifts heaven bestows on them, if looked at from different perspectives, might have varying answers. One perspective could be that we have to pay a price to acquire anything in life whatsoever. Nothing comes for

free. The uniqueness of the individual can be brought into light only after paying the due price.

“To do one task, you have to abandon all others”, are the enlightening words of an eminent Sufi which could be an answer to this question of why don't people achieve success in spite of being unique?

Therefore, to bring to the surface that talent, that will reveal the measure of your mind, you must work towards developing it with complete dedication and undivided attention. All else should be secondary.

On the other hand, it must be conceded that this is not an easy path to tread. Embarking on such a journey calls for practicing an iron restraint over your whims and fancies, a need to control unruly emotions and avoid every distraction.

Problems multiplying our fears and shaking our resolve, will show up at every corner. It is in such circumstances that we must hold on. To overcome such unpleasant situations one ought to become a 'big bird' thinker. For when a storm strikes, big birds fly well above the reach of the storm, and thus save themselves. It is this which is required from a man who undertakes the mission to discover himself.

To overcome unpleasant situations one ought to become a 'big bird' thinker. For when a storm strikes, big birds fly well above the reach of the storm, and thus save themselves.

You will falter, commit mistakes and sometimes even get derailed; it will require colossal courage to get up again and march ahead with renewed zeal and determination. Truly, the value of a man lies in his excellence; nevertheless, he must not forget that to achieve this most desirable goal, he must pay

an equally difficult price.

Life is an opportunity. It gives us the freedom to act as we should want to. If we fail to avail it because of our own neglect, we will have no justification to complain later. □



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.



ISSUE OF BLASPHEMY

THE Arabic equivalent of blasphemy is *shatm*. Blasphemy finds no mention in the dictionary of Islam. It is only an innovated term. According to *Hadith* (saying of the Prophet of Islam), any innovation in the religion of Islam is liable to be rejected. The authentic sources of Islam are only two: the Quran and the *Hadith*. No *Mufti* or legislature has the right to add any law to the Islamic *Shariah* (Jurisprudence).

The Prophet of Islam started his mission in 610 CE in Makkah and he died in 632 CE in Madinah. During these twenty-two years there were some people both in Makkah and Madinah who used abusive language against the Prophet of Islam. But the Prophet never said they should be killed. He opted only for two kinds of response: either he avoided the issue or he asked some of his Companions to meet them and remove their misunderstanding.

Looking at the early history of Islam, one can say that the present day Muslims must adopt this prophetic model. Muslims must either ignore such events or they must respond to them in a peaceful manner, that is, statement for a statement, a book for a book. There is no other option for Muslims.

The Quran does not ask others to refrain from using abusive language against Islam; it enjoins Muslims not to use abusive language against other religions.

According to the Creation Plan of God, everyone is free. Freedom is everyone's birthright, so no one can abolish anyone's freedom. People are free to use their freedom as they please, if you disagree with the point of view of your fellow beings, you can express your views in a rational manner; you must try to address their minds. Guns and bombs are no options for Muslims.

Killing in the name of blasphemy is common. Further, it is strange that no Muslim of repute speaks against this un-Islamic act. Almost all Muslims are silent on this issue. This silence is highly objectionable as there is a *Hadith*, that if one sees an evil and fails to speak out against it, such a person is as a dumb Satan.

If one takes the act of blasphemy as a difference of opinion, then it will be to one's advantage. Difference of opinion invites discussion, which gives a good opportunity to remove the misconceptions. Moreover according to the Quran, differences create an opportunity to turn an enemy into a friend.

Islam emphasizes a rational approach. The Quran does not ask others to refrain from using abusive language against Islam; it enjoins Muslims not to use abusive language against other religions. Islam tries to root out the cause of blasphemy rather than command people to kill those who commit blasphemy. Save others from your evil, to be saved from the evil of others.

Freedom of Expression

Islam greatly believes in freedom of expression. As such blasphemy in Islam is a subject of intellectual discussion rather than a subject of physical punishment.

The responsibility of the believers is to observe the policy of avoidance, and with a well wishing attitude, convey the message of God to them in such a manner that their minds might be properly addressed.

The concept of blasphemy is completely alien to the original teachings of Islam. Before the advent of Islam, difference of belief was also a punishable act. They used to punish on matters of belief just as on matters of social crime. This old practice is called religious persecution in history. Islam abolished this practice. The Prophet of Islam declared that personal belief is a subject of discussion and exchange rather than of legal punishment.

If you go through the Quran and *Hadith*, the only two authentic sources of Islam, you will find that there is not a single Quranic verse or

Hadith that gives this kind of injunction which says: Kill the person who commits blasphemy against the Prophet.

The Quran tells us that since ancient times God has sent prophets in succession to every town and every community. It says, moreover, that the contemporaries of all of these prophets adopted a negative attitude towards them.

There are more than two hundred verses in the Quran which reveal that the contemporaries of the prophets repeatedly perpetrated the same act which is now called 'blasphemy or abuse of the Prophet' or 'using abusive language about the Prophet'. Prophets throughout the ages have been mocked and abused by their contemporaries (36: 30); some of the epithets cited in the Quran being "a liar" (40: 24), "possessed" (15: 6), "a fabricator" (16: 101), "a foolish man" (7: 66). The Quran mentions these words of abuse used by prophets' contemporaries but nowhere does the Quran prescribe the punishment of lashes, or death or any other physical punishment.

This clearly shows that 'abuse of the Prophet' is not a subject of punishment, but rather a subject of peaceful admonishment. That is, one who is guilty of abusing the Prophet should not have corporal punishment meted out to him: he should rather be given sound arguments in order that his mind may be addressed. In other words, peaceful persuasion should be used to reform the person concerned rather than trying to punish him.

The Prophet of Islam declared that personal belief is a subject of discussion and exchange rather than of legal punishment.

Those who adopt a negative stance towards the Prophet will be judged by God, who knows the innermost recesses of their hearts. The responsibility of the believers is to observe the policy of avoidance, and with a well wishing attitude, convey the message of God to them in such a manner that their minds might be properly addressed.

Another important aspect of this matter is that at no point in the Quran is it stated that anyone who uses abusive language about the Prophet should be stopped from doing so, and in case he continues to do so he should be awarded severe punishment. On the contrary, the Quran commands the believer not to use abusive language against opponents.

The teachings of the Quran make it plain that it is not the task of the believers to establish "media watch" offices and hunt for anyone involved in acts of defamation of the Prophet, and then plan for their killing, whatever the cost. On the contrary, the Quran enjoins believers

to sedulously refrain from indulging in such acts as may provoke people to retaliate by abusing Islam and the Prophet. The Quran makes it clear that this responsibility devolves upon the believers, rather than on others. So others should not be held responsible and demands should not be made for them to be punished.

Looked at from this angle, the stance of present-day Muslims goes totally against the teachings of the Quran. Whenever anyone—in their judgment—commits an act of ‘abuse of the Prophet’, in speech or in writing, they instantly get provoked and their response is to start leading processions through the streets, which often turn violent, and then they demand that all those who insult the Prophet be beheaded.

Muslims generally advocate the theory that freedom of expression is good, but that no one has the right to hurt the religious sentiments of others. This theory is quite illogical. Freedom is not a self-acquired right. It is God, who, because of His scheme of putting man to the test, has given man total freedom. Then the modern secular concept of freedom is that everyone is free provided he does not inflict physical harm upon others. In such a situation, the above kind of demand is tantamount to

abolishing two things: firstly, to abolishing the divine scheme, and secondly, to abolishing the modern secular norm. Neither goal is achievable.

Muslims generally advocate the theory that freedom of expression is good, but that no one has the right to hurt religious sentiments of others. This theory is quite illogical. Freedom is not a self-acquired right. It is God, who has given man total freedom.

So the hue and cry against the so-called abuse of the Prophet is simply untenable. By doing so, Muslims can make themselves permanently negative but they cannot change the system of the world.

There is a relevant *Hadith* in which the Prophet of Islam said, 'A good Muslim is one who refrains from indulging in a practice that is not going to yield any positive result'. This *Hadith* applies aptly to the present situation of Muslims. They have been raising a hue and cry for a very long time against blasphemy, but it has been in vain. Muslims

must know that they are not in a position to change the world, so they must change themselves. There will be two instant advantages of adopting this policy: they will save themselves from becoming a victim of negative sentiments and will be able to devote their energies in constructive work. □

UNDERSTANDING THE QURAN

Need for Piety

IN order to understand the Quran, Quranic commentators mention the need to know several disciplines. This is right, but there is another way to understand the Quran, and which is undoubtedly the most important. And that is *taqwa*, or God-consciousness. We learn this point from the following verse of the Quran:

Be mindful of God; He teaches you:
He has full knowledge of everything. (2: 282)

Taqwa (God-consciousness) builds up a certain kind of mindset that makes one turn to God for help in every matter and for everything. To ask God for help is simultaneously a supplication or *dua* and a form of worship or *Ibadat*. One obtains great help in understanding the Quran from this sort of supplication. And along with this, one also obtains the reward for worship.

To pray to God for guidance in understanding the Quran is very important. It is to consult the author of a book in order to understand it. It is a quality only of the Quran that its Author is present every moment for consultation. There is no doubt that God provides guidance to every person. But this guidance comes, not in the form of words, but, rather, in the form of inspiration.

To pray to God for guidance in understanding the Quran is very important. It is to consult the author of a book in order to understand it.

From the Quran we learn that God inspires the heavens (41: 12), the honeybee (16: 68) and that He inspires human beings too (91: 8). Given this, it is not strange at all that God helps one who prays to Him to be able to understand the Quran properly.

Of the scholar Ibn Taymiyyah, it is said that when he found it difficult to understand any verse of the Quran, he would pray to God thus: "O Teacher of Abraham, teach me!" The Quran mentions God providing knowledge to Abraham.

God-consciousness is what will invoke God's help which comes in the form of inspiration for us to understand the correct meaning of God's guidance in the Quran. □



THE FIRST LAW OF SUCCESS

Persist and Persevere

THE British physicist and mathematician, Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) is famous for his formulation of the laws of motion. The third law of motion states that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. But there is also another law which was demonstrated in Newton's own life. This may be called the law of success.

Newton's father died three months before he was born. His mother soon re-married. As a result, Newton was deprived of his parents' love. A biographer of Newton's wrote: "Basically treated as an orphan, Isaac did not have a happy childhood." Apparently, this was a setback in Newton's life, but in reality it became his life's greatest plus point.

Every human being is born with unlimited potential. Nothing can stop his journey towards success, except apathy or a sense of frustration. If he does not become frustrated or apathetic, his own true nature will automatically guide him and take him to a destination of incredible eminence.

During his childhood days, the outside world held no attraction for Newton, and he started living in his own world. He came to be called a wool-gatherer, or absent-minded person. But it was later learnt that Newton, rather than being absent minded was really very focused. As a result of this intellectual bent, he was able to discover great scientific laws.

The lack of love and affection on the part of his parents was apparently a great drawback, but according to the law of nature, this turned out to be to his advantage. This was because it caused him to intensify his thinking capacity and he was able to unfold his hidden potential. In this way, his intellectual proclivities were turned to good account. Thus, in this sense, his minus point proved to be a plus point.

This is not just the story of an individual. It is more than that. It is the story of nature. Newton's life is a demonstration of a very important law of nature. Every human being is born with unlimited potential. Nothing can stop his journey towards success, except apathy or a sense of frustration. If he does not become frustrated or apathetic, his own true nature will automatically guide him and take him to a destination of incredible eminence.

There are many examples in history of people who, in their early years, became victims of all kinds of adversity. Yet, they did not allow themselves to become disheartened by the difficulties they faced, and their nature ultimately guided them—continuously channelizing their energy and talents—towards a goal they could not even have thought of in their early days.

In life, people often have to face untoward situations, for example, having to live in an orphanage, suffering accidents, sustaining material losses, receiving an incomplete education, having no inheritance to look forward to, failure to get a good job, etc. But those who, in spite of these drawbacks, never lose their courage and continue to make unflagging efforts, emerge in the end as super-achievers. □



Man's Personality

*Man's personality is paradoxical.
He is intellectually the strongest creature
in the world but, at the same time,
he is the weakest of all creatures.
He who is controlled by his mind, is a
strong person, while he who becomes the
victim of his emotions, is a weak person.
It is in one's own hands to become either
strong or weak. Through the mind man
becomes a superman. By contrast, it
is the feelings or emotions that render
human beings vulnerable. He who can
prevail over his own feelings can prevail
over the whole world. This is the master
principle for high achievement.*

THE ROAD TO PARADISE

Beset by Challenges

THE world of nature is a zero defect world. In it, there are all kinds of activities, but they do not produce any noise pollution. It has 'factories' operating round the clock but they do not produce any smog. There are many great industries, but they do not sully the water. For millions and millions of years, the world of nature has been functioning, but without causing any deterioration. All its parts are active, but we do not find anywhere that they have such a thing as a labour problem. The world of nature, although ephemeral, is nevertheless a complete world.

Of the numerous things in this world, everything has taken its ultimate shape. We cannot think of any other colour for the sky except blue. Neither can we think of any other colour for light and water. We cannot think of any other form which the grass or the trees could have had.

Nor can we think of any other colour for the vegetation but green. Even our greatest artists could not produce any other model for the ants or the tiger, for the deer or the elephant or the birds. It is a fact that everything in this world has been cast in its final mould. We just cannot think of a better model for anything that exists in this world of nature.

The present world, in actual fact, makes Paradise understandable to us. It is not Paradise. But man often mistakes it for his destination, and his life thus becomes one of missed opportunities.

Sometimes things happen which appear to be undesirable, for instance, landslides, floods, droughts, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, etc. Therefore, the opinion of some is that, the world of nature is not evil-free. But such remarks are the result of misunderstanding. In fact, such apparently unwanted occurrences

are either to maintain a balance in the world of nature, or are aimed at giving man a lesson—to cut him down to size. Such events, therefore, are desirable so that the natural state of the world may be maintained.

In contrast to the above, the human world is beset by many flaws and all kinds of defects and shortcomings, as a result of which man is continually faced with a state of unrest. Our human world is marked by the recurrence of the many unpleasant events. Here, there is suffering, old age, accidents and death. Life is marked with all kinds of misery and fear. Even when there does not appear to be any problem, there is

boredom and tension which in themselves are unbearable. The human story is one of continual effort to overcome this state of discontent. Everyone cherishes a dream of a perfect world for himself.

When we look at the human world in comparison to the world of nature and are aware of the fact that man dreams of a perfect world, we get to the question—is there a perfect world? In answer to this the beautiful world of nature in itself can be understood as a possibility of the existence of a perfect world. But, why is our human world full of imperfections?

The reason is the world of nature is governed by fixed laws and one can predict their pattern; an example to understand this would be the fact that man is able to predict the eclipses of the sun and the moon with precision and prepare calendars for the years ahead.

In contrast to the above, as man is bestowed with freedom one cannot predict consistent behaviour. The whole history of mankind is full of incidents of man's misuse of freedom and unpredictable behaviour.

The only exception being a few individuals who have lived a God oriented life by surrendering themselves to God and living a life without misusing their freedom. Such precious people will get their desire fulfilled in a perfect world in the kingdom of God, which is Paradise.

Paradise puts an end to the contradiction. The Creator of the universe made another world besides the present one, in accordance with the desires of human beings. That world is free of all kinds of limitations and disadvantages, including fear and pain. There, man will have every opportunity to live to his full capacity. His being will have its fulfillment. It is moreover an eternal world, where one shall remain young forever, and old age will not afflict one any longer. One shall not fall victim to any decline or decay. Paradise signifies a perfect world of eternal comforts

The Creator of the universe made another world besides the present one, in accordance with the desires of human beings. That world is free of all kinds of limitations and disadvantages, including fear and pain.

and pleasures for man, a world invested with a meaning far greater even than that immanent in the natural world. Paradise is an eternal abode: a perfect place for all kinds of happiness and comforts. It is the realization of human dreams of finding an ideal world. If the present world is a 'thorn,' then the world of Paradise is the 'rose'. Paradise is a heavenly colony where peace, love and noble character prevail.

Perhaps it is this divine plan which has thus been alluded to by Jesus Christ in these words:

Pray to God in these words: Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (MATTHEW 6: 9-10)

The present world is just an introduction to Paradise. It is not Paradise in itself. The present world is a passageway and not the destination. It is the place for preparation, and not for reaping the harvest. The present world is full of limitations. It does not have the means to fulfill the unlimited desires of man. It has all the means of subsistence at the animal level, but does not have the spiritual necessities of the higher level for man.

In this world everyone suffers frustration and failure. The reason is that everyone wants to find his desired world here itself, whereas the present limited and ephemeral world is not created for this purpose. That is why, despite all efforts, one fails to find one's dream world in this life. The present world, in fact, makes Paradise understandable to us. It is not Paradise. But man often mistakes it for his destination, and his life thus becomes one of missed opportunities.

A paradisiacal person, that is, one fit to inhabit Paradise, is such an ardent seeker of Paradise that he begins to feel as if he is living in Paradise while remaining physically in this world.

It is a waiting room and not the final destination of the journey. The question, "Who am I?" is asked by everyone, consciously or unconsciously. The answer is: "I am a traveller to Paradise". This world is a pathway and Paradise is its final destination. Man has come here to tread this path while on his way to eternal bliss.

The animals have no consciousness of tomorrow. They live only in their 'today' and die in their 'today'. Whereas, man has a sense of tomorrow. Man cherishes a very pleasant consciousness of tomorrow, an aspiration towards a better day, or the fulfillment of his dreams. All human beings strive hard to make their tomorrow better and better. But they do not find this 'tomorrow'. The reason being that this 'tomorrow' is not to materialize in this world, but will come into existence in the eternal life to come, i.e. in the Hereafter.

However, the entry to the Paradise of the next world is not open to all, being on a selective basis. It is only those who, in their life before

death, come up to the standard of the citizenship of Paradise, who will be granted an abode in this perfect world. Entry to this world of Paradise has been restricted. It will be given only to those pure souls who have brought with them the necessary qualification.

What is the necessary qualification and who are the pure souls?

The qualifying factor is for man to discover God who is in the unseen and voluntarily surrender himself before Him. He should adopt divine ethics without any external pressure to do so. He should develop his intellectual and spiritual being to such an extent that he produces in himself, the ability to inhabit the refined world of Paradise. Of the inhabitants of this world, only those will find a place, who have succeeded in maintaining a high moral character.

One who is able to discover Paradise, begins his life in Paradise from this world itself. Here, he will have the pleasure of its intellectual discovery; and after death he will have the pleasure of actually experiencing it. Today, he is blessed with peace of mind; tomorrow he will experience this peaceful life in his external world also. Today he has the full satisfaction of conviction at the intellectual level, tomorrow he will find an opportunity to live in the pleasures and comforts of practical life. Today he is living in a world of limitations, tomorrow he will find an unlimited world in which to live forever, in total freedom. Today he finds Paradise in the intellectual sense, tomorrow he will find it in the practical sense. Indeed, there is nothing greater than this for man.

The qualifying factor is for man to discover God who is in the unseen and voluntarily surrender himself before Him.

Such are the souls who have discovered God, and whose greatest concern is the Almighty. They worship only the one God, and devote their lives to improving their intellectual and spiritual abilities to a high degree. They have shunned the life of falsehood and adhered steadfastly to the way of truth, staying away from hypocrisy and remaining resolutely on the path of sincerity. They have adopted the path of honesty throughout their lives; and have of their own imposed the divine discipline upon their words and deeds. They reserve their feelings of love and fear exclusively for God. Their life and death is for truth. They do not live their lives for anything less than the higher cause.

Their activities are Hereafter-oriented rather than world-oriented. They succeed in steering clear of all negative feelings such as hatred,

jealousy, prejudice, selfishness and other such shallow thinking, and raise themselves to the highest moral level. They associate themselves with people for the sake of truth and distance themselves likewise for the sake of truth. They give and take for God alone. Their lips open for the truth alone. They follow the way of forgiveness and not of revenge in this world and do not embroil themselves in the attractions of the world, but fix their gaze on the Hereafter in all situations.

A paradisiacal person, that is, one fit to inhabit Paradise, is such an ardent seeker of Paradise that he begins to feel as if he is living in Paradise while remaining physically in this world. If he has found Paradise in terms of such a feeling, in the next world he will physically become a resident of Paradise.

When this paradisiacal personality develops in human beings, their intellectual plane reaches such heights that everything becomes immaterial. They do not find any fulfillment in the material things of the world. Owing to their heightened consciousness, they realize that the present world is not the place that they have been created for. Their hearts cry out to God: "O God! Bestow on us, the Paradise of the Hereafter. Give us a place in the world of Your neighbourhood."

God's angels will welcome those men and women, who reach the Hereafter with all the above qualities. The angels will come forward and say: "Congratulations, O Blessed Souls! Enter God's heaven by divine decree. Here, there is no death and no parting from this joyous world. The eternal life has been given to you for all eternity." The Quran says:

O Soul at peace! Come to your Lord well pleased, and He will also be well pleased with you. So enter among My chosen servants. And enter My Garden. (89: 27-30)

For one who has no concept of Paradise, total satisfaction in this present world will turn out to be a lifelong quest, that will end in failure. People expend all their energy in its pursuit, but they fail to construct this dream world for themselves.

According to the Quran, after death everyone will discover that 'tomorrow'. Those who have prepared for it will meet with all kinds of success there, while those who have not made the necessary preparations will be doomed. In the world of the Hereafter, all evil people will be separated from the good. They will be denied all the good things of that life. □

HUMAN LIFE

A Flowing River

HUMAN life can be likened to a flowing river. What is a river? A river in fact is a unique phenomenon of nature. In the river fresh water is being added to the existing water at every moment. This everyday phenomenon is responsible for the freshness of the river water. In the absence of this continuous flow of newly-added water, the river will lose its freshness; it will not be able to maintain its health-giving, nay, life-giving properties.

The same method is adopted by nature with regard to man. As we know, human beings continue to be born generation after generation. Within a period of a hundred years the previous generation is replaced by new men and women. If the old water in a river is replaced with fresh water, in human beings this same occurrence takes place in the form of previous generations yielding place to new generations.

A great wisdom lies behind this system set up in human life by nature. Its aim is that the coming generation should learn its lesson from the experiences of the previous generation. By benefitting in this manner it may continue its life's journey in a far better way. This is a precious gift of the previous generation to the new generation.

For instance, a father in the light of his experience, is able to give valuable advice to his overconfident son saying that while confidence is good, overconfidence can result in failure. The younger generation will not be able to understand this side of confidence on their own and can benefit from the experiences of the older generation.

When we read stories of heroic people we can find that they have acknowledged the role of many an elders' advice in their life. Such examples show how important the older generation is for the new generation. They bequeath wisdom to the new generation. They pass on principles in the light of practical experiences. In this way the younger people can avoid doing the same mistakes and be safe from losses.

The wise elderly are a valuable gift of nature to the energetic young. If human life is like flowing water it will remain fresh but if it is stagnant in a closed space it will become stale and unhealthy. This is a beautiful lesson of nature for us and the experience of human history testifies to this in practice. □

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



GIFT FROM THE LORD OF THE WORLDS

THE Prophet Muhammad began his mission in Makkah in 610 CE. Then, the time came when the chieftains of Makkah compelled him to leave the city. At that time, the Prophet said to his Companions: "I was ordered to migrate to a town which will swallow other towns. It is called Yathrib, and that is Madinah". (*Sahih al-Bukhari*)

What is said in this *Hadith* is not about the superiority of the Prophet or of the city of Madinah. Rather, it refers to a general law of God. When a person faces one-sided oppression or when something is wrongly taken away from him, such a person becomes eligible for God's special assistance. God gives him much more than what other people have wrongly taken away from him.

This special gift of God is given to the person who develops the eligibility for this gift. In these conditions of oppression, he must remain patient and non-complaining till the final limit. Under no circumstances should his sight turn away from God. He should pray for

A person who displays positive behaviour in the midst of negative experiences becomes eligible for God's special gift.

those who oppress him, and as for himself, he must always remain hopeful of succour from God.

When a person displays this kind of positive approach, it is no ordinary matter. It leads to the creation of a new sort of character within him, a character that is imbued with a desire for the well-being of his oppressors, that remains firmly established in positivity despite negative experiences, and that leaves all one's affairs to God. Such a person's heart is, under all circumstances, filled with spirituality. He does not react to his circumstances, but, rather, entrusts all his affairs to God to manage. It is this sort of person who is given that special gift from God that is mentioned in the above-quoted *Hadith*. □



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MORE THAN MONEY

Potential

A BOY who worked in an airport as a helper to passengers on wheel chairs was offered money for his services. The boy refused saying, "Don't give me money, but give me your blessings. I am appearing for an examination, please pray that I pass". The elderly passenger placed his hand on his head and prayed for him.

The boy's words are not ordinary words. They are the words representing a creative mindset. It is to opt for a self-made principle rather than trying to live by favours.

When you try to live on your own, you are trying to tap your own potential. Everyone is born with enormous potential, but potential can be developed only by hard work. The best policy for anyone trying to succeed in life is to try to unfold this potential rather than try to receive any advantage from elsewhere.

People generally say with envy that a particular person was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. But this is wrong. Fortunate is one who is born with an incentive spoon in his mouth. If you are born to a life of hardship, it will activate you and this will give you the incentive to work. On the other hand, if you are born to a life of comfort, it will kill your motivation. It is a fact that self-motivation is far greater than external support.

The best policy for anyone trying to succeed in life is to try to unfold his potential rather than try to receive any advantage from elsewhere.

Every favour is limited in nature. There is no favour that has unlimited scope. But when you try to unfold your own potential, that is like embarking upon a journey that has no limit. Favour may give you temporary relief,

but hard work is the only way to achieve great success. All the super achievements in history were the result of hard work rather than favours.

It has been rightly said: 'It is not ease but effort, not facility but difficulty that makes men.' Facility may seem to be good, but difficulty is better in terms of results. Opting for effort is good for both physical health and intellectual development.

Living on favour means living as a 'taker' in your society. But living as a hard worker means being a 'giver' in your society. And it is a fact that the 'giver' is better than a 'taker'.

When you achieve something by dint of hard work, it gives you one precious thing, and that is confidence. Hard work is always accompanied by confidence. And confidence leads to peace of mind. Nothing is better than peace of mind.

Once a poor man came to the Prophet of Islam and said, "Give me some money for my livelihood". The Prophet said: "That would not be good for you". Then the Prophet advised him thus: "The upper hand is better than the lower hand", gave him some silver coins and said: "Go to the forest, cut some wood and sell it to earn your livelihood and meet me in two month's time."

The man accepted this advice of the Prophet. Two months later he came back to the Prophet and said: "I am happy with my job. Now I have decided not ask for anything from anyone".

By hard work one can earn money but through money one cannot achieve hard work. For a life of dignity one should not obtain favours from others, but rely on one's own efforts. □

Every favour is limited in nature. There is no favour that has unlimited scope. But when you try to unfold your own potential, that is like embarking upon a journey that has no limit.



Unpleasant Experiences

Unpleasant experiences are painful but they make a necessary contribution to advanced intellectual development.

POLITICAL INSURRECTION UNLAWFUL

No Confrontation

AFTER the period of the pious Caliphate, corruption set in amongst the Muslim rulers. However, the religious scholars did not rise in revolt against the rulers, scrupulously avoiding any confrontation. They continued to expend their efforts in non-political fields. This was not simply a matter of chance but the adoption of a policy based on the clear injunctions of the *Shariah*.



Books of *Hadith* record the teachings of the Prophet in detail, in this regard. The Prophet had clearly foretold that in later times all kinds of rot would set in amongst the rulers. They would become tyrants and unjust, but even then his guidance to the people was never take up arms against the rulers. Instead the Prophet advised that when the believers found themselves being ruled by such tyrants, they should take to the mountains with their 'camels and goats', instead of launching campaigns against them.

'Camels and goats', signify those opportunities which existed in non-political fields, and which will always exist irrespective of the corruption of the rulers. The Prophet's injunction meant that at such times, the believers have to peacefully exploit the existing opportunities in non-political fields by avoiding any confrontation in the political field. These injunctions of the Prophet were so clear that the religious scholars formed a consensus that, staging an insurrection against the rulers was unlawful, and therefore to be totally avoided in all circumstances.

In the commentary of *Sahih Muslim*, Imam an Nawawi, commenting on the traditions in the chapter '*Al-Imarah*' writes: "Do not adopt the way of confrontation with the rulers in the matter of their power. If you find them going against Islam, you should try to make the truth clear to them by sincere counseling. So far as launching campaigns and taking up arms against them to oust them from positions of power is concerned, that is unlawful by the consensus of Muslims, even if the ruler is evil and a tyrant (*Sahih Muslim*).

This injunction of the Prophet of Islam, as made clear above, was based on extremely important considerations. The truth is that in the first phase (and in later phases as well) a large number of academic, *dawah* and reform works outside the political field, had to be performed.

Without this, the very history of Islam would have remained incomplete, for if the religious scholars had engaged themselves in confrontation with the political institutions, all these constructive activities could never have been carried out. Therefore, the Prophet of Islam gave express commands to avoid political confrontation with the rulers at any pretext. This avoidance served as a guarantee that all the constructive activities outside the field of politics would continue uninterrupted.

In every society, two parallel systems exist side by side—one political and the other non-political. The latter governs a variety of institutions, which function independently of politics. According to the scheme of Islam, the non-political system established at the social level has to be always kept stable; all believers are expected to do their utmost to ensure that despite changes, rot or corruption in the political set-up, Islam should be firmly established on a non-political basis. □

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Spiritual Food

Extracting the spiritual content from material things will give you the spiritual food to enable you to develop yourself as a spiritual person. If your earnest desire is to live your life as a spiritual person, you must learn the art of such extraction.

ACCEPTANCE OF REALITY

For a Stress Free Life

A CCEPT reality, and you are bound to enjoy a life that is stress and tension free. What is stress and tension? Stress is a feeling of excessive demands being made on one's physical and mental energy and tension is a feeling of mental strain. Why are people afflicted by these ills?

Perhaps, in most cases, it is because they want to live their lives according to their own way of thinking, without taking into account the existence of the external world. Its demands must necessarily be met, otherwise you will fall prey to that form of negativity, which is generally referred to as stress.

The fact is that our life is like a cogwheel. A cogwheel is a toothed wheel that engages with another toothed wheel in order to change the speed or direction of a moving mechanism. Life runs with the help of two wheels: one is ours and the other is nature's. Your cog is weak, while nature's cog is strong. The latter has a speed of its own and you have to adjust to its pace. If you try to run your cog at a pace faster than that of nature, your cog will crack and disintegrate, while nature's will remain intact. It is this difference that inevitably creates stress. People try to run their cog according to their own will, and thus nature does not help them. As nature's cog is stronger and man's cog weaker, it is always man who suffers.

If you plan your life as you ought, you need not suffer stress. Right planning is realistic planning.

If you plan your life as you ought, you need not suffer stress. Right planning is realistic planning. First of all, you have to make an objective estimate of your strength and then attempt to adjust to the laws of nature. Rather than place yourself in confrontation with these laws, you should fall in line with them, and in this way, you will certainly be able to lead a stress-free life.

For example, if you get a job in a multinational organization, you will naturally not want the hire and fire rule to be applicable to you. But, to encourage a desire of this kind is unrealistic. It will lead to unpleasant complications, as this is the procedure generally followed in such companies. If you want to have a stress-free life, you have only two

options: either take a multinational job and accept that the principle of hire and fire will be applicable to you, or don't take a job there at all.

Once an American professor, who had come to Delhi to deliver a lecture in a university, was approached by an Indian student who, with the aim of studying in America, asked for his help in getting admission to some university there. The professor smiled and said that, admissions to universities in America was done on the basis of merit and not through recommendations. If in such a situation, an unqualified student went to America and did not measure up to the standards there, he would certainly suffer from tension. However, if he were eligible for a place in an American university, this would not be the case. There would be no tension involved.

It is important not to be over-ambitious but preferably to be a realist. If you are over-ambitious, you will become a victim of tension. It is only if you set yourself achievable goals that you will be able to lead a tension-free life.

Stress is not a naturally occurring problem. It is a problem created by individuals themselves. Be ready to accept reality. And then you will certainly be able to enjoy a stress-free life. □



Social living

Social living means living through experiences, meeting challenges, learning lessons and teaching. Society is like an informal university. One who tries to stay away from society will commit social suicide. Instead of complaining against society one should adopt the principle of adjustment.

LABOUR OF A LIFETIME

Motivation

HELEN HOOVEN SANTMYER was an American writer, educator and librarian. She is primarily known for her best-selling epic, *And the Ladies of the Club*, published when she was in her eighties. The following is one of the incidents in Helen Hooven Santmyer's life (1895-1986) which can inspire us and motivate us in our lives.

At one point of time in her life, while working as a librarian in a reference section, she started to write a book. At first she worked on it in her spare time. Then, ill health forced her to retire. She continued her work in the nursing home where she was hospitalized. She wrote the whole book out herself, in long hand, on a ledger. After completing her work she presented it to the Ohio State University Press for publication. The final manuscript filled eleven boxes. A handful of copies were printed, but the book met with no initial success. It seemed as if Helen Hooven Santmyer's name would vanish without trace from the American literary scene.

Then one person who bought the book read it and liked it. He was praising it in an Ohio library one day, when the librarian overheard his conversation. The word was passed on to a producer, then to an agent, and then to the American Book Club. Each party found the book entrancing and worthy of a greater audience.

Finally, Helen Hooven Santmyer's book entitled "*And Ladies of the Club*", was nominated for the Book Club Award. It won the award, and with it a sum of over a million dollars.

Strong belief in something makes one rise above one's worldly situation. It makes one concentrate on one's goals in life.

Helen Hooven Santmyer did not seek fame or wealth from her novel. Its topic—the story of two Ohio families in the period between the American Civil War and the great depression of the early 1930's, was obviously not aimed at the commercial market. The author believed that Sinclair Lewis had painted a false portrait of the American dream in his novel of the 1920's "*Main Street*". She wanted to correct

that picture, as Haynes Johnson writes in the *Washington Post*.

The author was clearly not in the market for big bucks. She obviously was motivated by saying something which she believed. The bare account of how she produced the work over the years, in her spare time, in

sickness and in health, in itself provides an astonishing testament of her perseverance.

Strong belief in something makes one rise above one's worldly situation. It makes one concentrate on one's goals in life. No matter what hindrances and obstacles lie on the path, one soldier on until one reaches the final destination.

The conviction that spurs a true believer on, is faith in the life to come. He bears all forms of hardships, suffering and adversity in this world. He realizes that this ephemeral world is for the trial of man; in the next eternal world of God he will be rewarded for his efforts. As Helen Hoover laboured for over half a century in the compilation of her book bearing all forms of adversity in her determination to attain her goal in life, so the believer labours all his life for the attainment of reward in the Hereafter. And, as her sustained efforts bore her due reward in this world, so the believer's sustained effort will bear him due reward in the next world: he will be made to enter a Paradise of eternal repose and bliss. □

*The believer labours
all his life for the
attainment of reward
in the Hereafter.*



Superior Moral Status

One has attained a superior moral status when one becomes indifferent to praise or blame and when his opinion of others does not depend upon whether they agree or disagree with him.

PARENTING

An Intellectual Challenge

THE present age is the age of education and the greatest need is that our generation should be equipped with the learning of the highest standard. The right role of the parents is of utmost importance in this issue.

For parents there are only two options; either to accept whatever their children do or to understand their needs and minds and address them in such a way that they are able to grasp what is being said to them.

Those parents who fail to do this have nothing but complaints about the behaviour of the younger generation. It must be understood that it is possible to help our children to change their attitudes. The requirement for this is the intellectual ability of the parents and elders to properly address the minds of the present smart generation.

The facts however point out that majority of parents use traditional methods of putting across things to the children. This mindset of the parents needs to reassessed and a healthy blend of the traditional and the modern has to be worked out. Parents need to redefine their thinking in order to make it understandable to the new generation. It is failure in this regard that has given rise to resistance from children towards higher standards of learning. It is a question of self-training. If parents want to bring about a change of attitude towards learning in their children they must prepare themselves to be good counsellors. It is weak counselling on the part of the parents that has created this problem.

Pampered children know nothing beyond their own desires. They cannot meet the challenges which they have to face in the external world.

The second problem in regard to this aspect is the problem of pampering. Parents in their great affection for their children often pamper them. While caring is good, pampering is bad. Pampering fosters an easy-going nature in children. A comfort loving nature is the worst thing in this world of harsh realities. Pampered children know nothing beyond their own desires. They cannot meet the challenges which they have to face in the external world.

We can see many examples in our circle of acquaintance where children brought up under pampered conditions with their parents find it very

difficult to cope with studies or work away from home. They find that everything is different and that they do not get the unconditional affection or care that they are used to, by those around them. Here, everything comes with a price in terms of hard work, adjustment, acceptance of reality, proving their ability and accepting the fact that many things cannot be changed. Without being trained for this they find themselves thrown into this situation. This leads them to facing a bigger challenge within the normal challenges of life.

The above result is the negative aspect of pampering. A pampered child is like a product turned out in the factory called home which is not suitable for the market. Parents should understand that their children require education not only in the professional field but that they also need spiritual training. The former kind can be had in educational institutions but the centre of learning for the latter is home. The parents are the teachers in this institution.

Parents need to redefine their thinking in order to make it understandable to the new generation. It is failure in this regard that has given rise to resistance from children towards higher standards of learning.

It is very important for the parents to realize that the language of do's and don'ts will not serve any purpose. They must prepare themselves for a more sensitive and complex approach. Indeed they must prepare themselves in what may be termed as 'rational spirituality'. □



Memories

Of the two kinds of memories good and bad, the former gives you energy, while the latter ruins your life.

TOLERANCE

Eternal Principle

Tolerance is a law of nature stamped on the hearts of all men. —Voltaire



NOTHING could be truer than this statement; tolerance is, indeed, a permanent law of nature. But it is not something which has to be externally imposed, for the human desire for tolerance is limitless. Just as truth and honesty are virtues, so is tolerance a virtue. And just as no one ever needs to ask for how long one should remain truthful and honest, so does one think of tolerance as having an eternal value. The way of tolerance should be unquestioningly adopted at all times as possessing superior merit.

A man who is intolerant is not a human being in the full sense of the expression. To become enraged at antagonism is surely a sign of weakness. Of course, there are many who do not want to recognise the principle of tolerance as being eternal, for, in conditions of adversity, the temptation to retaliate becomes too strong. The feelings of anger which accompany negative reaction must somehow be vented, and those who think and act in this way are keen to retain the illusion that, in hitting back, they are not doing anything unlawful.

If people could only learn to tolerate others' differences, their very forbearance would become a great enabling factor in collective human development.

Such thinking is quite wrong. In reality, when a man is enraged at anything which goes against his will, tolerance as a priority becomes paramount. Many men strive to become supermen. But the true superman is one who, in really trying situations, can demonstrate his super-tolerance. Just any act of antagonism does not give us the licence to

be intolerant. Rather, such occasions call for greater tolerance than in normal circumstances. In everyday matters, where there is none of the stress and strain of opposition, no one has difficulty in being tolerant. It is only in extraordinary situations, fraught with conflict, that the truly tolerant man will prove his mettle.

The United Nations proclaimed that the ability to be tolerant of the actions, beliefs and opinions of others is a major factor in promoting

world peace. The statement issued by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, (UNESCO), emphasises that amidst the resurgence of ethnic conflicts, discrimination against minorities and xenophobia directed against refugees and asylum-seekers, tolerance is the only way forward. It pointed out that racism and religious fanaticism in many countries had led to many forms of discrimination and the intimidation of those who held contrary views.

Violence against and intimidation of authors, journalists and others who exercise their freedom of expression, were also on the increase along with political movements which seek to make particular groups responsible for social ills such as crime and unemployment. Intolerance is one of the greatest challenges we face, said the UNESCO Statement.

Intolerance is both an ethnic and political problem. It is a rejection of the differences between individuals and between cultures. When intolerance becomes organised or institutionalised, it destroys democratic principles and poses a threat to world peace. This proclamation of the U.N. is most apt. The prime need of the world today is indeed tolerance.

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

In this world, unity is achievable only by learning to unite in spite of differences, rather than insisting on unity without differences. For total eradication of differences is an impossibility.

Some people hold that the removal of all differences is the *sine qua non* for bringing about unity. But, this view is untenable, for the simple reason that, it is not practicable. You may not like the thorns which essentially accompany roses, but it is not possible for you to pluck out all the thorns and destroy them completely. For, if you pluck out one, another will grow in its place. Even if you run a bulldozer over all rosebushes, new plants will grow in their place bearing roses which are ineluctably accompanied by thorns. In the present scheme of things, roses can be had only by tolerating the existence of thorns. Similarly, a peaceful society can be created only by creating and fostering the spirit of tolerance towards diversities. In this world, unity is achievable only by learning to unite in spite of

differences, rather than insisting on unity without differences. For total eradication of differences is an impossibility. The secret of attaining peace in life is tolerance of disturbance of the peace.

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

The policy of tolerance or forbearance enhances your efficacy, while intolerant behaviour reduces it.

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

In the same way, a society whose members hold identical views and never have any controversial discussions, will soon find itself in the doldrums. The intellectual development of the members of this society will be frozen, because personal evolution takes place only where the interaction of divergent thinking provides the requisite mental stimuli. It is only after running the intellectual gauntlet that a developed personality emerges. If, in a human society, this process ceases to operate, the development of character will come to a standstill.

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

After 1947, when the first government of independent India was formed, two important leaders were included in it. One was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the other was Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel. Pandit Nehru's westernized ideas were in great contrast to the orientalism of Sardar Patel. And this caused frequent differences of opinion between these two leaders. But this proved to be a boon for the nation, because with Pandit Nehru's abilities compensating for the shortcomings of

Sardar Patel, and vice versa, the end result was one of an efficacious complementarity. The above is a good example of the difference between the respective natures and opinions of individuals essential for human development in general.

The habit of tolerance prevents a man from wasting his time and talent on unnecessary matters. When negatively affected by another's unpalatable behaviour, your mental equilibrium is upset, whereas when emotionally untouched by such behaviour, your mind will fully retain its equilibrium and, without wasting a single moment, you will continue to carry out your duties in the normal way. The policy of tolerance or forbearance enhances your efficacy, while intolerant behaviour reduces it.

*A peaceful society
can be created only
by creating and
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of tolerance towards
diversities.*

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



Key To Success

When work is done in a spirit of co-operation, co-ordination and blessed with an atmosphere of harmony in an organization, the sky is the limit in quantity and quality of production. It is unity then which is the true key to success.

THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

An Abrupt End

AFTER a long journey, the express train was approaching its destination. The view from the train indicated that the final station was near. Hundreds of passengers were filled with new life. Some were fastening their bedding; some were changing clothes; some were just peering expectantly out of the window. All were excited, eagerly awaiting their journey's end.

Suddenly, there was a violent thud. The express had collided with a train waiting in the yard. One can easily imagine what would have happened after the collision; happiness suddenly turned to grief, and vibrant lives were faced with violent death; hope was transformed into despair. A story, which seemed to be heading for a happy ending, became a tragedy at the final moment.

Man strives to make himself comfortable in this world, to see his ambitions fulfilled and his life a successful one. But death comes just as his dreams are nearing completion.

So it is with life. Man strives to make himself comfortable in this world, to see his ambitions fulfilled and his life a successful one. But death comes just as his dreams are nearing completion.

He leaves his lavish mansion for the desolation of the grave, his glistening body to be devoured by earth and worms. His life's labour vanishes without a trace as if there was no connection between him and all that he had strived for on earth.

Visions of greatness had occupied his mind, but he is forced to enter the grave, and from there proceed to God's court of justice. This world is quite different from the one he had sought to construct for himself on earth.

Here he is destitute, without money to fulfil his needs, or clothes to hide his body. All his worldly earnings come to nothing. His friends desert him. He is left powerless, with nothing that he had depended on in the world to help him. What a tragic outcome to such a long, arduous journey. □



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 CE. 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**

Believers, be strict in upholding justice and bear witness for the sake of God, even though it be against yourselves, your parents, or your kindred. Be they rich or poor, God knows better about them both. Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice. If you conceal the truth or evade it, then remember that God is well aware of all that you do. (4: 135)

In life it often happens that man is confronted with a situation where, on the one hand, lies the path of desire and self-interest, and on the other hand, lies the path of justice. Now those who are unmindful of God, those who have no conviction that God is watching them on all such occasions follow the path of their desires. They consider it an achievement to ignore the call of truth and take to the path of self-interest and worldly considerations. But those who fear God, who regard God as their guardian, have their eyes always set on truth and justice and act according to their demands. They sincerely desire that they may leave this world having done no injustice to anyone, having fully adhered to the path of truth and justice.

This desire for truth and justice is so heightened in them that it becomes impossible for them to tolerate any behaviour which does not measure up to the standard of absolute justice. When confronted with wrongdoing, they dare to proclaim the demands of truth and justice, even if such a stand amounts to adversely affecting the interests of their family or goes against their own worldly considerations. They say only what justice would demand. It is also very wrong from the standpoint of justice to give influential persons their due while denying the rights of those who are weak and without influence. A true believer is one who deals justly with everyone, whether weak or powerful.

Believers, believe in God and His Messenger and in the Scripture He sent down to His Messenger, as well as what He sent down before. He who denies God, His angels, His Scriptures, His messengers and the Last Day has surely gone far astray. (4:136)

Believers, believe' is like saying, 'Muslims, become Muslims!' Calling oneself a Muslim or regarding oneself as such does not suffice for one to be held a Muslim in the eyes of God. A true Muslim is only that person who has made God the centre of his life and the source of his trust and confidence. A Muslim is one who believes in the Prophet and his guidance to the exclusion of all else. A Muslim is one who adheres to the revealed Scripture in such a manner that his thinking and his feelings become totally subordinated to it. A Muslim is one to whom belief in the angels means that he is surrounded by God's guardians who are constantly watching him. A Muslim is one whose belief in the Hereafter is so profound that he begins to examine all his words and deeds in the balance of the Hereafter. One who becomes a believer in this sense is, in the eyes of God, on the right path, on the straight path to success in the Hereafter. One who does not become a believer in this sense has gone astray, however much he may consider himself a Muslim, a believer.

As for those who come to believe, and then deny the truth, and again come to believe, and again deny the truth, and thereafter grow stubborn in their denial of the truth—God will never forgive them, nor will He guide them. Warn the hypocrites that for them there is a painful punishment. As for those who take the deniers of the truth for their allies rather than the believers—do they seek honour in their company? Surely all honour belongs to God. (4: 137-139)

This tussle between belief and unbelief continues through life. In dealing with any matter the human mind starts thinking along two lines: it tilts either to the demands of desires or of truth and justice. If on such occasions the thinking and feeling of a person take to the path of desires, this will amount to a denial of the faith he professes to believe in. On the other hand, if he makes his thinking and feelings subservient to the demands of truth and justice, this would amount to his becoming a true Muslim.

Whenever any matter of truth is brought before people, it is met with two kinds of responses: one from a person, who adopts the attitude of modesty and acknowledges the truth, and the other from a person who is so proud and haughty that he denies the truth. The first response stems from *Iman* and faith, while the other stems from

faithlessness. One who is not a true believer loves worldly honour and prestige. He, therefore, feels attracted to like-minded people who—even if they be the deniers of the truth—will add to his honour and glory. One so enamoured of worldly affairs is not interested in those whose association does not add to his honour and prestige, even if they be true God-worshippers. □



Failure

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

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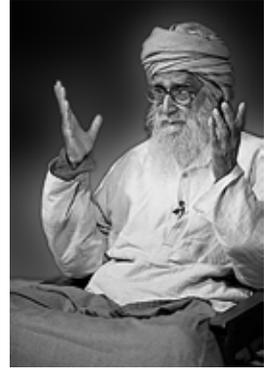
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ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered



How did you first think of the term 'de-conditioning'?

As per my knowledge, the term 'de-conditioning' in the sense in which I take it is not used in the dictionary. This term first came to my mind when I read a *Hadith* of the Prophet of Islam. According to this *Hadith*, every person is born as Mr. Nature, but due to environmental influences he very soon becomes Mr. Conditioned. I learnt from this *Hadith* that the first task before a person is to remove his environmental conditioning and return to his original nature. Therefore I say that a person must break down his conditioning, and hence become de-conditioned. It is only after going through this process can right thinking be initiated in a person.

What do you mean by de-conditioning?

I would like to give an example to explain my point. When a person is born, he instantly begins to benefit from the life-support system provided universally in nature. This system is a human being's prerequisite to lead life on earth. But experience shows that every person takes for granted the resources of nature's life support-system. As a result, one does not show gratefulness to the Creator for all the blessings that one enjoys right from birth. Here one must de-condition himself and must consciously discover these support systems as bounties of the Creator, otherwise one will continue to remain ungrateful to God.

Please give an example to explain conditioning.

An example of conditioning is that when a person is born, he receives everything from his parents. This is why all of his emotions become associated with his parents: his affections are for his parents alone. As a person matures, he must think and realize that whatever he gets in this world is entirely from the Creator. When a person de-conditions himself, he will discover this reality and then will be able to form a bond with the Creator and draw in nearness to Him. Generally, people are unable to de-condition themselves in this matter as their emotional attachment is only with their parents, although it is the Creator who should be the centre of one's emotions.

What is the method for de-conditioning our wrong conditioning?

There is only one method for undertaking one's de-conditioning. This method is to engage in introspection. A person needs to develop self-thinking. Without any bias, one must study on one's own. One should be so serious in this matter that one should even go to the extent of self-hammering to overcome wrong conditioning. This is the only way of de-conditioning ourselves, there is no other method in this regard.

What will happen if we do not de-condition ourselves?

In the light of my experience, not doing one's de-conditioning leads to failure in life. De-conditioning develops rational thinking in a person and makes him adhere to value-based ethics. One who does not de-condition himself is left with only self-interest to guide his life. After de-conditioning one develops objective thinking, whereas without it, one is driven only by self-interest. The latter kind of person is unable to develop his personality.

How much time does it take to de-condition years of wrong conditioning?

Overcoming one's wrong conditioning depends upon one's own willpower. If a person possesses strong willpower, he will be able to instantly and completely de-condition himself. However, if a person is devoid of strong willpower his process of de-conditioning will be delayed depending on the level of his determination. It is also possible that one who has weak willpower may never be able to de-condition himself at all.

How to prevent further wrong conditioning?

There is only one way to save oneself from wrong conditioning, and that is by way of intellectual development. Without intellectual development a person cannot even know that he is a case of wrong conditioning. And when a person is unaware about himself, he will also not be able to de-condition himself.

An example of an intellectually developed person is one who does not get offended when somebody critiques him, rather he takes it as an opportunity to think why he was criticized. This approach would help him understand that he was a case of conditioning and that he should come out of it.

Is it possible to become fully free of wrong conditioning?

It is true that one takes the influence of one's environment, and hence becomes conditioned. But if a person is intellectually awakened and at

the same time has a strong spirit of self-correction, he will surely be able to completely de-condition himself.

Can one de-condition oneself on one's own or does one necessarily require a mentor?

In my view a person can undoubtedly do his own de-conditioning. For this self de-conditioning two conditions are essential: first is that one should be intellectually awakened and second is that he should have a strong desire for self-correction. Without these two prerequisites, self de-conditioning is not possible. Since most people do not possess these two qualities, it is advisable that the majority should discover some competent person and take him as their guide or mentor in this matter.

If de-conditioning requires a guide, then should it be done in person or can we do it by reading the literature and listening to the talks given by the person whom we choose as a guide?

If one reads the writings of one's guide and regularly listens to his talks, then this method can be an alternative of having a personal audience with the guide. But the condition for this is one should repeatedly read the writings of the guide and listen to his talks on a daily basis. □



Spiritual Training

To train oneself spiritually, the most important thing a person must do is to train himself to refrain from taking offence. The moment one allows oneself to be offended, the door to spiritual training closes.

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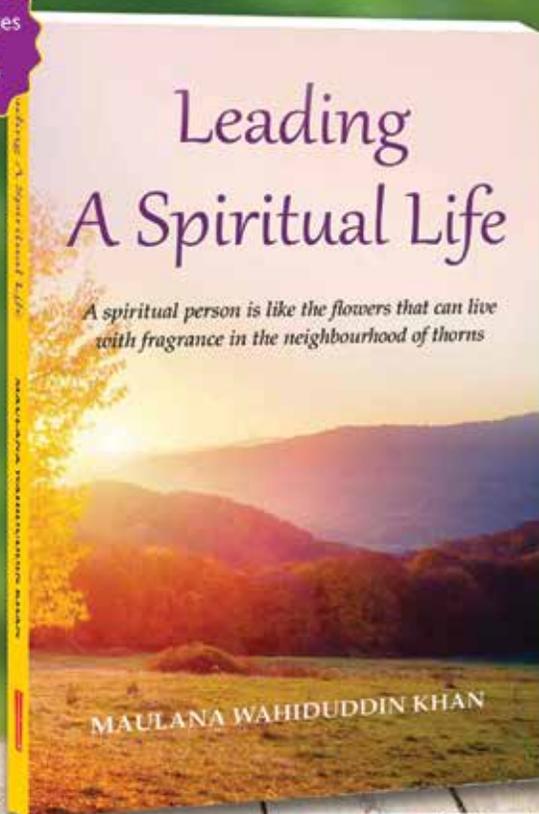
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