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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



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men or break them.**

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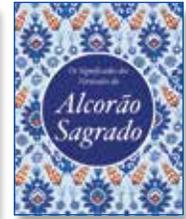
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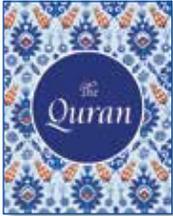
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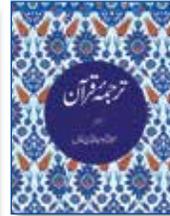
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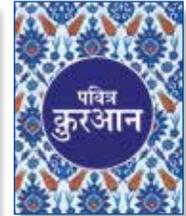
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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

ISSUE 49 JANUARY 2017

CHIEF EDITOR

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

PROF. FARIDA KHANAM

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

NAGHMA SIDDIQI

MARIA KHAN

PROF. ZAHEERUDDIN

AIJAZ AHMED

MOHAMMAD USMAN

PRINTER AND PUBLISHER

FATHIMA SARAH

OFFICE

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

002, HM WIMBERLY, 6, BERLIE STREET CROSS
LANGFORD TOWN, BENGALURU 560025, INDIA

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

Greetings and Best Wishes for the New Year!

It is January the first month of the year 2017. We are again in that time of the year when every individual has a chance to change, to improve, to repent, to learn from the past mistakes and to tread into the future with wisdom and precaution.

In this journey of life towards progress and all that is truly good for mankind, ***Spirit of Islam*** brings profound wisdom from the pen of our mentor Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, the Islamic spiritual scholar, known as Islam's spiritual ambassador to the world. Some of the subjects discussed in this monthly journal are the creation plan of God, peace for its own sake, the importance of discovering God, the necessity of de-conditioning to return to the good nature on which humans are born, the sense of accountability to God and the existence of a perfect world in the Hereafter where all of man's desires shall be fulfilled.

Life's principles pertaining to inter-relationships, virtues and helping one in getting rid of vices and habits that are an obstacle to success, have had a great influence on the readers according to the feedback we receive. People from all age groups and from different backgrounds both religious and secular, have responded positively to the magazine.

With this encouraging response from our readers we begin another year full of hopes and aspirations with complete faith and trust in the Lord Almighty. We beseech Him with all humility to continue to help us in our endeavour to work towards global peace and spiritual living. We are deeply grateful to God for our readers to whom we are very thankful for their gracious patronage.

The year 2016 has been important in terms of the progress of reaching out to more people as the magazine has been added to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google Play Store. Time and again the Maulana speaks of the significance of the modern means of communication, thereby to acknowledge God's bounties and also acknowledge the role of all the people who have worked and continue to work to bring us this miracle of modern technology.

When we reflect on the matter we realize that everything in the universe is assisting us in discovering God and bringing us all closer to each

other. But unfortunately we human beings, in our limited and narrow thinking are creating barriers between ourselves in various ways. We pray that all of us should use our creativity exclusively for the good of mankind and explore ways of becoming those personalities who are held deserving of God's Paradise.

Wishing you all a year full of knowledge, wisdom, peace and security!

Fathima Sarah

Publisher, Spirit of Islam.

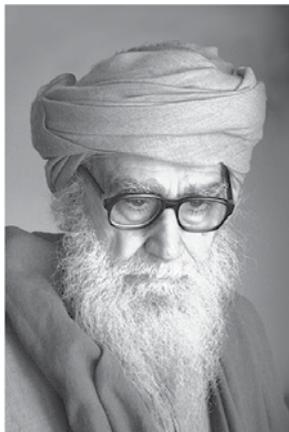
thecentreforpeace@gmail.com



Be Cautious

If there is a very small wrong doing that you may be involved in, Satan begins his work from that point and totally deviates you from the right path. This fact can be understood by an illustration in the natural world. If only a toe of yours goes into the mouth of a crocodile, then through it the crocodile will pull your whole body towards itself. So, one should be very cautious and not overestimate oneself. One should introspect and develop modesty. Humility is the basis of religion.

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.

LESSONS FROM DE-MONETISATION

ON the 8th of November 2016, when I tuned in to the 8:00 AM news as usual on the All India Radio station, I was surprised to hear the voice of the Prime Minister of India instead of the regular newsreader. The Prime Minister announced that the “500 rupee and 1,000 rupee currency notes presently in use will no longer be legal tender from midnight tonight, that is 8th November 2016.” He added that these notes will not be considered valid currency anymore and will be “just worthless pieces of paper.” The Prime Minister said the measures were aimed at curbing the “disease” of corruption, black money and terrorism which continue to plague the country.

This announcement came as a sudden catastrophe to many in the nation just as if it were an earthquake. They reacted with much uproar and lamentation, but there was nothing that could be done to change this decision.

This incident was a worldly matter, but thinking about it I was reminded of a verse from the Quran

This Day your wealth and your offspring will be of no avail, and only those will be saved who come to God with a sound (purified) heart. (26: 88-89)

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

The words 'wealth' and 'offspring' in this verse are symbolic of the materialistic culture of man. Today, the sole concern of man is the acquisition of material wealth and worldly power. He considers money as everything and believes it to be the answer to all his desires. In such a situation, the Prime Minister's announcement came as a bolt from the blue, as much of the wealth that people had accumulated was now as good as garbage. After hearing this, many people burnt huge piles of money and many others just threw them out with the garbage.

If within a moment of the Prime Minister's declaration, valid currency had become dead currency, consider then what will be the situation when the Lord of the universe declares that "Today your wealth and

Consider then what will be the situation when the Lord of the universe declares that "Today your wealth and your offspring will be of no use".

your offspring will be of no use" In another place in the Quran, God declares, "On that Day man shall flee from his own brother, his mother, his father, his wife and his sons." (80: 34-37)

In this world, there are many people whom others, consider their 'whole and soul' in life; but suddenly in the world of the Hereafter they will be deserted by these very same people. In the verse, 'flee from his own brother' does not mean actually deserting his brother. Rather, all those people whom a person, held to be his

support and succour in the world will now appear as a burden to him. Wealth, offspring, relatives, friends, positions, armies, governments and all other things that man once relied on as his strength—will all be shattered in the world of the Hereafter and man will find himself all alone and powerless in front of Almighty God.

If all such things come to naught in the world of the Hereafter, what is it which will be of use in the Hereafter? There it is only a 'purified heart' that will be of any value. This matter has been related in the Quran as follows, "Paradise is the recompense for those who purify themselves". (20: 76)

A verse of the Quran that marks the signal for the Hereafter says, "The trumpet will be blown and, at once, people will rise up from their graves, and hasten to their Lord." (36: 51)

There is another symbolic meaning of this verse which can be explained as follows. Every person lives in a protective shell that he has created for himself. This shell is made of money, wealth, material interests, family and societal ties, position and power. When suddenly 'the trumpet is

blown', all these protective shells will be broken and man will stand exposed and bare.

With the Prime Minister's announcement of demonetisation, all the 'black money' hoards were exposed and laid bare. In a similar manner, with the 'blowing of the trumpet', all the hidden qualities of people will be exposed and their true personalities laid bare. Tomorrow, in the world of the Hereafter that is sure to come, mankind will be separated into two types of personalities; a purified personality and a 'blackened personality'. (3: 106)

It is negative thinking that leads to the 'blackening' of one's personality. Negativity gradually obscures man's personality and just as a dye colours water, negative thinking blackens the personality.

The Quran mentions that there will be two 'trumpet signals' for the Day of Judgement. I believe that the first 'warning signal' is a symbolic one which can, therefore, be of more than one type. The second 'warning signal' will be the final one, that will usher man into the world of the Hereafter. Looking at it from this perspective, the Prime Minister's declaration of 8th November is a symbolic 'warning signal' that will reveal glimpses of the Hereafter to the man who has the vision to see it.

Today, the more wealth that one has, the more is one distraught and stressed. Today, there are piles of money but their value is nothing. In a similar manner, in the Hereafter, people will have their 'pile' of deeds that they have accumulated in the world, but it will be of no use to them. Just as today, man lives in a self-centered world and does not come to the aid of his fellow human beings, on the Day of Judgment 'he will have no friend' (69: 35), and 'no friend will ask about his friend'. (70: 10).

There are many people whom others, consider their 'whole and soul' in life; but suddenly in the world of the Hereafter they will be deserted by these very same people.

After the announcement by the Prime Minister, people were in a position to protest and condemn the decision. There have been many debates and demonstrations against the decision. But in the Hereafter, there will be no one to raise their voice against the declaration of God. (20: 108).

Such incidents that occur in our lives are equivalent to the 'first warning trumpet' of the impending Day of Judgement. Similarly, every

earthquake and storm, every natural disaster, every accident, old age, disease and death are all a first 'warning trumpet'. This 'first warning trumpet' is a reminder of the Day of Reckoning to follow soon, but when the 'final trumpet' is sounded it will signal the end of time for mankind on earth and usher in a new period of eternal life in the Hereafter.

The most crucial aspect of this matter is that every man has dedicated himself to the immediate acquisition of material gain and has no concern for his eternal life to come. He cares only about obtaining immediate wealth, money, health, fame and position and makes no effort towards preparing for his everlasting life in the Hereafter.

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The Prime Minister's declaration of 8th November 2016 was sudden and unexpected. Similarly, death and the Day of Judgement will also appear suddenly. The time has come for man to think about his eternal life. Instead of adorning his present home, which can be seized from him at any moment, he must

work towards preparing an eternal home for life in the Hereafter. And what is this eternal home for man? It is Paradise.

We do not need to travel into space to understand where or what is Paradise. To get a live understanding of Paradise, consider this saying of the Prophet of Islam:

Paradise has been veiled with unpleasantness.

If you can develop your minds so that you are able to lift the veils of evil and of things that are prohibited or to be avoided, then Paradise will become apparent to you. In this present and temporary world we face many unpleasant experiences. Paradise will be a place free of all such experiences, it will be a place of eternal joy, whose inhabitants 'shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.' (2: 62)

That is why the people of Paradise will live in eternal happiness and praise God saying:

Praise be to God who has taken away all sorrow from us.

(THE QURAN 35: 34)

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan
editor@thespiritofislam.org

DISCOVERING THE MODERN AGE

Building Economic Empires

THE problems of the present day stem from the advent of modern Western colonialism which gained momentum in the 17th century. Although the colonialism of the Western powers in African and Asian countries was basically industry-oriented, it was from the outset militarily reinforced.

The phenomena of political occupation can be traced back, in fact, to previous history. In former times, kings mainly wanted to expand their rule over other countries, in order to occupy greater areas of agricultural land. But with the advent of mechanical power, political rule became irrelevant. Now, organization and infrastructure replaced political power. The setting up of an organized industrial infrastructure was enough to enable exploitation of the targeted countries, without political rule over them being established.

The old type of colonization has ostensibly ended, but in the form of economic exploitation it is still very much there. For example, there are multinational corporations everywhere in the world. What are these multinationals?

They are the modern commercial form of the old empire. Then there is outsourcing which is also a kind of political expansion of the old variety. After the Second World War, the Western powers discovered the utility of this model on a large scale and completely abandoned the idea of political occupation by military strength. Now they have established a new kind of lordship all across the world in the form of economic peaceful empires. Multinationals are clear manifestations of this peaceful empire.

Those Muslims who subscribe to the gun and bomb culture as a means to seek to attain supremacy over various nations are completely unaware of this modern development. Their violent activities are a direct result of this unawareness of what the modern age has to offer. The only way to make Muslims a peaceful people, is to make them conscious of this revolutionary change in the modern age. □

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NEED, OR PANDERING TO DESIRES?

Beware of Wastefulness

*It is extravagance to eat everything you desire.
(Prophet of Islam, reported by Ibn Majah)*

EVERY person lives between two things: needs, on the one hand, and desires, on the other. To spend your wealth on things that you need is a justified and legitimate use of it. But to spend it in order to fulfil your desires is an action that you will have to answer for, on the Day of Judgment.

Umar reiterated the same point when he said:

"It is enough for a person to be wasteful if he eats everything that his heart desires." (Kanz ul-Ummal)

To waste your money is to spend it on something that you do not really need but that you simply desire.

In this matter, the right thing to do is that whenever you are faced with a situation that requires money to be spent, take time off to seriously think whether this is for something that you truly need or for something that you simply desire. If it is for a genuine need then decide in its favour. But if it is not really for a necessity but only a desire, then you should desist from spending on it.

To waste your money is to spend it on something that you do not really need but that you simply desire.

In this matter one needs to analyse each of one's wants. If one fails to do this even once, one may find oneself sliding down the slippery slope of wastefulness, and then it may be very difficult for one to retrieve oneself. □



Our Role

Everyone is endowed with the capacity to play his role in the world, which he can do provided he understand the abilities God has given him, and utilizes them.

THE COMPLETE WORLD

Paradise Awaits You

GOD has created man with innumerable desires and longings. The means exist in this world for the fulfilment of man's desires, but even then man is unable to fulfil them. Sometimes old age intervenes sometimes man's inherent limitations prevent him from achieving what he wishes; he is hindered by some weakness and, sometimes, fortune does not favour him. The pleasures of this world are short-lived. Its beauty soon fades from our vision. Man longs for worldly honour and happiness, but before he has even begun to savour them they begin to dwindle away to nothing. The world has everything that man wants, but it is not possible for anyone—even those who seem to have everything in life—to achieve all that they desire. Happiness is not necessarily the lot of the 'successful'.

Is man fated to come into the world with all sorts of desires and then leave the world disappointed at having achieved none of them? This is not the case: Man has a desire for perfection, but his world is tragically imperfect. His life is meaningless until he inherits a world free of all limitations and disadvantages. As a compensation for the incompleteness of this world, God has promised us Paradise. God has prepared a Paradise for man where he will be granted all that he desires. After death man enters a perfect world; a world free of all defects. He will find there everything that he had longed for on earth but had been unable to obtain.

But gaining entry to this realm, will be no easy matter. The price that has to be paid for an after-life of perfection is living through the present world of imperfection and being able to sacrifice this world for the next. Heaven after death is for those fortunate ones who live righteous lives on earth; who prove by their noble actions that they deserve an equally noble reward. Man will find in the next life the dream world which eludes him on earth. But only those who have paid the price for this in this life will deserve Heaven in the next. This is the only way to enter Paradise. Those who are not able to make this sacrifice will also enter an eternal world after death, but it will be a world of anguish and despair as opposed to one of joy and bliss. □

Heaven after death is for those fortunate ones who live righteous lives on earth; who prove by their noble actions that they deserve an equally noble reward.

GOD: A SOURCE OF CONVICTION

Succour for Helpless Man

IF one observes the universe with a powerful telescope one will notice that there is one exceptional planet among all other heavenly bodies—and that is, planet Earth. One will also observe that amidst the vast lifeless universe there is just this one planet that hosts life and also has an abundant supply of everything that is necessary to sustain life. This rare exception will fill one with awe and wonder!

The Earth, its moon and the other planets in constant motion around their own axes, and are also revolving continuously around the sun. The entire solar system is also rapidly revolving, along with the Milky Way galaxy, in huge orbits. This galaxy again is in continuous motion along with many other galaxies, in yet another massive orbit.

It will be an awesome experience to witness this constant motion of the stars and planets. One can also see unbelievably enormous masses of heavenly bodies countless in number, racing about amidst which the

planet Earth would appear like a little speck. All of this will so astound one that compared to this, our own existence will appear absolutely insignificant.

Without God, our life cannot be complete, and that without God's help, we can never be truly successful.

This experience will lead to the discovery of two important things. Firstly, the existence of an All-Powerful God, who is its Creator as well as its Sustainer. If one can bring to mind this scene of the massive universe, one's heart will testify that the universe itself is a proof of its

Creator. And the second discovery will be that of the utter helplessness of man. God is an indispensable need of man, for without God, man's very existence is impossible. When one discovers this reality, one will race towards God and call out with one's complete being "God! Please help me! Without You, nothing at all is possible for me."

In this vast universe, it is God who is man's support. It is He alone who can help us cross this river of life and lead us to the other shore. Belief in God is everything for man. Without this belief, man is nothing at all.

Each one of us, in our daily life, feels the same utter helplessness that we experience when we observe the vast universe. Each one of us repeatedly goes through experiences that lead us to realize our severe limitations. Very often, we do not get what we want. Every now and then,

situations arise in our lives that compel us to feel completely helpless. In addition to this, fear of loss, sickness, accidents, old age and death tell us that we are utterly dependent on a force that is infinitely greater than us, and that without the help of this infinitely superior power, we simply cannot succeed. This feeling or realization is a psychological proof of God's existence. Every person necessarily encounters this psychological experience. Every person finds within a firm proof of God's existence.

In this vast universe, it is God who is man's support. It is He alone who can help us cross this river of life and lead us to the other shore.

For each one of us, our nature is continuously calling out to us, telling us that we need God, that without God, our life cannot be complete, and that without God's help, we can never be truly successful. □



A Good Human Being

What does it mean to be a good human being? It means to begin to live on the divine plane, to cultivate divine attributes within oneself. For this, one has to fight with the evil inclinations inside oneself. It calls for working throughout the life to keep away from negative influences. This is a path of continuous sacrifice. One needs to cleanse one's mind of all false ideas and beliefs. One must engage in an intellectual operation, no matter what the cost, even if it demands that one has to give up one's wrong beliefs that one may deeply cherish.

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.



PEACE AS A PRINCIPLE TO BE PRACTISED

A PERUSAL of the Quran followed by a study of latter-day Muslim history will reveal a blatant contradiction between the two—that between principle and practice. Where recent developments in some Muslim countries bespeak the culture of war, the Quran, on the contrary, is imbued with the spirit of tolerance. Its culture is not that of war but of mercy.

At the very beginning of the Quran, the first invocation reads: “In the name of God, the most Merciful, the most Beneficent.” Throughout the Quran, God’s name is thus invoked no less than 114 times. Moreover, the Quran states that the prophets were sent to the world as a mercy to the people (21: 107).

A perusal of the Quran followed by a study of latter-day Muslim history will reveal a blatant contradiction between the two—that of principle and practice.

The word *jihad* has nowhere been used in the Quran to mean war in the sense of launching an offensive. It is used rather to mean ‘struggle’. The action most consistently called for in the Quran is the exercise of patience. Yet today, the self-styled ‘Muslim Mujahideen’ have equated “God is Great” with “War is Great.” For them, the greatest reward is to be able to wield a Kalashnikov rifle. In the light of on-going conflict, by these Muslims in the name of Islam we must ask why such a great contradiction has arisen between the principles of Islam on one hand

and the practice of Muslims, on the other. At least one root cause may be traced to historical exigency. Since time immemorial, military commanders have been accorded positions of great eminence in the annals of history. It is a universal phenomenon that the military hero has been idolized even in peace time and is treated as a model for the people. It is this placing of heroism in the militaristic context which has been the greatest underlying factor in the undue stress laid on war in the latter phase of Muslim history.

It is this placing of heroism in the militaristic context which has been the greatest underlying factor in the undue stress laid on war in the latter phase of Islam's history.

With the automatic accord in Muslim society of a place of honour and importance to the heroes of the battlefield, the annalists' subsequent compilations of Muslim history have tended to read like an uninterrupted series of wars and conquests. These early chronicles having set such a precedent, subsequent writings on Muslim history followed the same pattern of emphasis on militarism. The Prophet's biographies were called *Maghazi*, that is, *The Battles Fought by the Prophet*, yet the Prophet Muhammad in fact did battle only three times in his entire life, and the period of his involvement in these battles did not total more than one and a half days. He fought let it be said, in self-defence, when hemmed in by aggressors, where he simply had no other option. But Muslim historians—lying in the face of fact—have converted his whole life into one of confrontation and war.

We must keep in mind that the Prophet Muhammad was born at a time when an atmosphere of militancy prevailed in Arab society, there being, in the view of the Arabs of that time no other path to justice. But the Prophet always opted for the avoidance of conflict. For instance, in the campaign of Ahzab, the Prophet advised his Companions to dig a trench between them and the opponents, thus preventing a head-on clash. Another well-known instance of the Prophet's dislike for hostilities is the Hudaibiya peace treaty, in which the Prophet accepted all the conditions of the the other party. In the case of the conquest of Makkah, he avoided a battle altogether by making a rapid entry into the city with ten thousand Muslims—a number large enough to awe his opponents into submission. In this way, on all occasions the Prophet endeavoured to achieve his objectives by peaceful rather than by war-like means. It is, therefore, unconscionable that in later biographical writings about the Prophet, many of the events of his life have been arranged under the heading of 'battles' (*ghazawat*). How he managed to

avert the cataclysms of war has not been dealt within any of the works which purportedly depict his life.

Ibn Khaldun, the celebrated 14th century Muslim historian, was the first to lay down definite rules for the study and writing of history and sociology. He followed the revolutionary course of attempting to present history as a chronicle of events centering on the common man rather than on kings, their generals and the battles they fought. But since war heroes were already entrenched as the idols of society, the caravan of Muslim writers and historians continued to follow the same well-worn path as had been trodden prior to Ibn Khaldun. When people have come to regard war heroes as the greatest of men, it is but natural that it is the events of the battlefield which will be given the greatest prominence in works of history. All other events will either be relegated to the background or omitted altogether.

In the past when the sword was the only weapon of war, militancy did not lead to the mass-scale loss of life and property such as modern warfare brings in its wake. In former times, fighting was confined to the battlefield; the only sufferers were those engaged in the battle. But today, the spear and sword have been replaced by mega-bombs and devastating long-range missiles, so that killing and destruction take place on a horrendous scale. Entire human settlements have now become the global arena of war. Even the air we breathe and the water we drink are left polluted in the aftermath of war.

When people have come to regard war heroes as the greatest of men, it is but natural that it is the events of the battlefield which will be given the greatest prominence in works of history.

Most people think Islam to be outdated and irrelevant precisely because of its militant interpretation. Demands for a reform in Islam

are on the increase, as the 'old' version of Islam cannot apparently keep pace with the modern world. But, in reality, it is not reformation which is required but revival. What is needed is to discard the superficial and erroneous militant and political interpretation of Islam and to adopt the original, 'old' version of Islam based on peace, mercy and the love of mankind. The so-called Muslim Mujahideen have been exhorting their co-religionists to do battle all over the world. But the Quran says: '...and God calls to the home of peace' (10:25). It is up to right-thinking people everywhere to reject the militant version of Islam and to start seeing and understanding Islam as it is truly represented by the Quran. □

RESPONSIBILITY OF TRENDSETTERS

Role Models

"Whoever adopts a good practice and introduces it to others he will receive its reward for both adopting it and for helping others to follow it. Whoever adopts a bad practice and introduces it to others, he will have to bear the burden for both adopting it and for being the cause of introducing it to others who may follow it."
(Prophet of Islam, reported by Ibn Majah)

WHAT is said in this *Hadith* is not about lay people or the masses, but about those who have the role of opinion-makers in society. Opinion -makers become role models for others to emulate. In today's parlance one could call them 'trendsetters'.

The trendsetters of any social group have a very big responsibility. They must seriously think before taking any step because it is likely that other people will begin to do as they do, so much that it would become a deep-rooted tradition that would be very difficult to stop. The fact is that the responsibility of the opinion-makers is much more than that of lay people. In every society, it happens that some people come to enjoy the status of opinion-makers and others begin to copy them. Such people must be very careful in their actions. No excuse in this regard is acceptable. □

Opinion-makers become role models for others to emulate and have a very big responsibility. They must seriously think before taking any step.



Contentment

A feeling of contentment enables a person to rise above trivialities and live in higher realities. He practices simple living and high thinking.

FATWA ACTIVISM

Self-styled Shariah

THERE is much talk these days about different kinds of activism. One hears of political activism, social activism, community activism, media activism, judicial activism, etc. A section of Muslim religious leaders have launched a new form of activism of their own—what can be called '*fatwa* activism'. They think that by issuing a flurry of *fatwas* they can reform Muslim society. So, one hears of scores of *fatwas* against 'un-Islamic' dress, *fatwas* against women being present at certain religious places, *fatwas* calling for the killing of people accused of traducing the Prophet, *fatwas* demanding the banning of books by controversial authors, *fatwas* declaring some persons as apostates and insisting on their social boycott, *fatwas* announcing television or other things to be *haraam* or forbidden, *fatwas* declaring banking to be un-Islamic etc. *Fatwas* of these sorts have been issued in their thousands in recent years, but almost all of them have proved to be practically without any impact. They have not been able to produce the changes that they intended to.

The literal meaning of the word fatwa is 'the expression of an opinion on a certain matter'. By its very nature, there will always be the possibility of more than one opinion on any matter.

It is interesting to note one instance where a mufti refused to give a *fatwa* despite being asked to do so. Such an approach is the right way to deal with the situation. This instance concerns a noted Indian Islamic scholar, Maulana Abdul Haq Haqqani, who died in 1831. He has authored a commentary on the Quran. In his period, the British had replaced gold and silver coins with paper money. This new form of money appeared to be unacceptable according to the rules of traditional *fiqh* or Muslim jurisprudence. The Maulana was asked to issue a *fatwa* on

the matter to opine whether this was Islamically-acceptable or not. However, he declined to give the *fatwa*, and simply said, 'My *fatwa* in this regard won't work. Instead, the paper money will.' In such matters, this is the correct Islamic approach to adopt.

The literal meaning of the word *fatwa* is 'the expression of an opinion on a certain matter'. By its very nature there will always be the possibility of more than one opinion on any matter. On certain specific issues for which there is no clear guidance in the Quran and *Sunnah*, the Islamic

scholars (*ulema*) express by means of *ijtihad*—the exercise of judgement by sound reasoning—their opinion on the matter in question. This is regarded as a *fatwa*.

Nowadays, *fatwas* are used in a completely improper manner. Instead of a *fatwa* used as an expression of opinion, it is employed for the enforcement of a command.

People do not understand the wisdom in the *Shariah*. Instead they engage in a self-styled *Shariah* of *fatwas*. With the changing times, wisdom demands that the *fatwa's* also change accordingly. However, today the *fatwa* is often used against others like a gun with the *fatwa* fired at them. As a result, when a person fails to find a solution to a matter in the guidance available through deliberation in the Quran and *Sunnah*, he resorts to the gun of *fatwa* to reach his ends.

A *fatwa* can take two forms. The first is in the form of a question asked to a mufti—an Islamic scholar who is an interpreter or expounder of Islamic law—by a person with a regard to a matter directly concerning himself and with the intention of gaining guidance thereby.

Instead of the fatwa used as an expression of opinion, it is employed for the enforcement of a command.

The second way of eliciting a *fatwa* relates to a particular social evil in the wider society, regarding which an individual approaches a mufti for a *fatwa* on his own. It is not proper for the mufti to give a *fatwa* in response to this sort of question. If he does so, the *fatwa* is unlikely to have any positive role or influence in correcting the social ill that it seeks to address. Instead, it can turn out to be a cause for giving Islam a bad name. This has happened in numerous cases. To paraphrase the words of Maulana Abdul Haq Haqqani such *fatwas* did not work and the social ills they sought to combat remained as before. Thus, scores of *fatwas* have been delivered on a variety of social ills, against *biddat* or innovations in religion, against dowry, english education, bank deposits etc. But, needless to say, all these *fatwas* proved to be of little or no effect.

According to Islam the right methodology with regard to *fatwas* is that a person seeking an answer to a personal question should approach a mufti for a *fatwa*. A mufti should issue *fatwas* only in such cases. A *fatwa* must not be asked or issued when the matter does not directly concern the person who requests it.

The question then arises as to what the proper Islamic method of social reform is. This proper method is one of persuasion and guidance, through writings and lectures, and not through delivering condemnatory *fatwas*. People should be addressed in such a way that the advice given to them impresses itself in their hearts and they then recognize and act on that advice on their own. In today's terms, this could be termed as 'educational activism'. Islam's approach to solving social ills is through this sort of educational activism, rather than '*fatwa* activism'.

A guiding principle in this matter is to be found in a narration which is contained in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*. According to this report, Aisha (wife of the Prophet) said that the Quranic verses that were revealed in the initial stages of Islam dealt with Heaven and Hell so that in this way people's hearts would be softened enough to receive the Islamic message. Then, gradually, after people had developed adequate capacity to accept Divine laws, the Quranic commandments prohibiting adultery and the consumption of alcohol were revealed. Had these commandments been revealed in the initial stages of Islam, people may not have accepted them, and, instead, might have refused to give up adultery and alcohol.

People do not understand the wisdom in the Shariah, instead they engage in a self-styled Shariah of fatwas.

From this instance one can understand that in general social reform cannot happen through delivering *fatwas* against social ills. Rather, for this sort of work, people's capacity and willingness to accept and act on divine guidance must first be developed. Only after this can religious laws be enforced. To issue orders, in the form of *fatwas*, in the absence

of developing people's capacity to accept religious guidance is no solution at all. Often, it is not the ignorance of religious rulings that causes social ills. Rather, the basic cause is the lack of the appropriate spirit among people.

This is why social reform cannot begin with the issuing of *fatwas*. It has to begin with work towards inculcating and promoting the right spirit among people to ignite their consciousness and their capacity and willingness to abide by the teachings of the faith. Only after this work has been sufficiently done should issues be explained to people using the language of the religious law. Without developing this inner spirit among people, seeking to cure social ills by issuing *fatwas* from

without would be of no use. This is putting the cart before the horse.

The only criterion for judging 'fatwa activism', or, for that matter, any other form of activism, is its efficacy in producing the expected results. Only those methods of activism are worthwhile that actually succeed in achieving their goals. Action must always be result-oriented. The present-form of 'fatwa activism' must be seen and evaluated in the light of this basic principle. □

When a person fails to find a solution to the matter in the guidance available through deliberation in the Quran and Sunnah, he resorts to the gun of fatwa to reach his ends.



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ISLAM IN THE CHANGING WORLD

Reformation Through Re-application

MODERN anthropologists generally look upon religion as a social phenomenon. This is not however, a correct view of Islam for Islam is not a product of social circumstances. As a revealed religion, it enjoys the status of an eternal and sacred religious system.

Yet, there is always the question of how Islam is to remain applicable to the altered scenario of the changing times. The answer is that Islam is not a set of innumerable details. On the contrary, Islam embodies a set of fundamental values. Whatever be the conflicts brought about by changing times, they are inevitably to do with ritualistic details concerning forms—never with fundamental values.

For instance, Islam preaches Monotheism, which is as a principle and by its very nature eternal. Similarly, Islam prescribes deterrent

Whatever be the conflicts brought about by changing times, they are inevitably to do with ritualistic details concerning forms—never with fundamental values.

punishments for certain serious social crimes. This again is a reality which is immutable in the face of changing circumstances. To date, no such facts have come to light that disprove this principle of Islamic law. In modern times, however, it has been opined that a need has arisen to effect reforms in Islam. This is the result of a number of current misconceptions.

Presented below are a few examples which professedly relate to Islam, but which are rather human additions to Islam made by Muslims themselves. These cases ostensibly give a clear indication that there is a need for reform, but it is not the reform of Islam itself which is required, but its purification of the additions.

For instance, a section of the Muslim *ulema* of modern times held that the acquisition of Western sciences was un-Islamic. This was a case of the *ulema* having made a serious error of judgement, for Islam actually encourages progress in learning.

Another common misapprehension is that in Islam monarchical rule is the preferred form of government. It is true, of course, that in later times certain Muslim nations favoured the institution of monarchy and that even today this system is extant in a number of Muslim countries. But in no way is this the result of Islamic teachings. It is, in fact, a

deviation from the archetypal democracy advocated by the Prophet and his Companions. It is a matter of historical record that Islam, in its early period, set an example of the highest form of democracy. It would certainly be correct also to say that it was Islam which, for the first time in history, put an end to monarchy by systemizing politics on the democratic method.

The truth is that the examples taken from Islamic history which purport to show the necessity for reform relate not to religious but to temporal issues. Such reforms are, of course, necessary procedures, but Islamic reform *per se* would, more appropriately, mean the purification of Islam of external influences rather than any modification of Islam itself.

It has to be conceded, however, that our understanding of Islam does sometimes have to face problems created by changing circumstances. On such occasions solutions are found by the exercise of *ijtihad*. *Ijtihad* in this case means the re-application of Islamic injunctions, rather than any reform or change in their original substance.

For instance, during the first phase of Islam, dates were based on the sighting of the moon. Now, after the discovery of new scientific methods of scanning the heavens, the calendar is based on dates determined by astronomical observations. This, however, will not result in the reform of updating Islam. It will only mean a re-application of Islamic injunctions. It is hardly proper to evolve a theory of religious reform on the basis of such examples.

The truth is that the examples taken from Islamic history, which purport to show the necessity for reform relate not to religious but to temporal issues.

Islam's injunctions on the subject of women are often cited as being in need of reform. It is held that under the influence of ancient circumstances, women were degraded by Islam and that now, in view of recent developments, the rectification of this error on the part of Islam is a matter of the greatest urgency.

To be brief, Islamic commands pertaining to women are concerned with practical requirements rather than with establishing the superiority of one gender over another. While 'modernists' favour out-and-out equality between the two genders, Islam believes in their being equal, but different in roles. Islam's position on this matter is that, in matters of respect, there is no difference between a man and a woman. As regards rights, too, both are treated as equals. However, for the sake of being practical, their respective roles are different.

This division between the two is not made on the basis of superiority or inferiority. It is based, rather, on biological differences. It is a fact that by birth, the female is the more delicate and emotional while the male is the tougher sex. As such, in everyday matters both have been assigned such duties as are suited to their respective biological composition. Such a division—a practical necessity—is to be found in all societies. A similar division can also exist between men and men and between women and women in relation to their biological dispositions.

Islam is a religion of nature, and just as there is no question of revising nature, neither is there any question of revising Islam.

That is why in the practical arrangements of life, each gender has been assigned a role suitable to their biological structure. This division is in no way anachronistic. It is simply in accord with nature. Nature has created certain differences between men and women by birth. This biological difference is such a decisive factor that those societies which refuse to accept it in theory are obliged in to perpetuate this same division in practice, thanks to the overwhelming pressures of nature.

In many countries in spite of complete freedom given to women, it has not proved possible to abolish this division. Till today, many extremely physically demanding jobs are largely dominated by men. Women however, have secured their place in the relatively less onerous and less stressful departments. When women, for example, can move their fingers delicately over the keyboards of computer, why should there be any mention even of them engaging in heavy manual work in factories? The realities of biology have to be given due recognition.

In short, the concept of revision is not relevant to Islam. Revision, after all, implies that out of ignorance, mistakes have been made in the laying down of Islamic precepts and that after the subsequent acquisition of superior knowledge, man is now in a position to set them right. But this is simply not true of Islam. Islam is a religion of nature, and just as there is no question of revising nature, neither is there any question of revising Islam. Re-interpretation of the scriptures may be the need of the hour, but this certainly does not mean changing the original system. All it means is a re-application of the original commands so that they may accord more exactly with the changed circumstances. This kind of fresh interpretation—always a requirement of Islam in the past—will remain a requirement in the present and in the future. □

RELIGION, A DIVINE NOT A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

Differentiate between Islam and Muslims

IF nuclear energy is understood as a means to manufacture lethal weapons which destroy life, one is bound to be opposed to it. But if nuclear energy is considered on its own merit, it will not matter how it is being misused by some people to make atomic bomb. In spite of being opposed to the atomic bomb, one will continue to support nuclear energy.

No one makes the mistake of thinking of nuclear energy itself being harmful. The harmfulness or benefits of a concept or phenomenon relates to its user. But there are many who make this mistake in the study of religion. Religion is essentially divine truth. But anthropology usually treats it as a social phenomenon. For this reason, people have formed a mistaken concept of religion. Worst of all, this method of study prevents the student from being able to distinguish between theory and practice. Many people think of the practice of Muslims and Muslim nations, for instance, as the true Islam. It is this method of study which has led people to write books like *The Dagger of Islam* and *Militant Islam* in recent years. The authors of these books saw that Muslims are habitually “daggers drawn” and militant in their demands. So, according to their concept of religion, they came to the conclusion that these were defining features of Islam itself.

Look at Islam in the light of Quran and Hadith instead of in the light of the practice of Muslims.

But if one thinks of religion as a truth revealed by God and preserved in the text of Quran and *Hadith*, then Islam ceases to be a social phenomenon and becomes an ideology. One now begins to look at Islam in the light of the Quran and the *Hadith* instead of in the light of the practice of Muslims.

If one wishes to understand Islam, one must look at it apart from the Muslims. One must think of it as a divine belief, rather than as a social phenomenon. Only then can an accurate and fair picture of Islam be formed. □



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



MAN, AN EXCEPTIONAL CREATURE

A TRADITION of the Prophet of Islam reported in books of *Hadith* reads: God created Adam in His own image (*Sahih al Bukhari*). However, this does not mean that man is like God in physical appearance. It means that God has in a limited way granted man those divine attributes which exist in perfect form in His being.

In the entire universe man is an exceptional creature. He is the only creature who has been granted a complete personality. He thinks, sees, hears, carries out planned action and can enjoy a multitude of things by using his senses.

Man has been given these exceptional gifts so that he may engage himself in an exceptional task. This exceptional task is to recognize and accept the Creator at a conscious level. In this way, the Almighty Lord of the universe has given man the opportunity to discover Him at the level of realization. This realization should enable a person to see God who is physically unseen, to understand that he is actually powerless even though he seems to have some powers, and so that he may surrender himself before God of his own free will, and not out of compulsion.

Man is blessed in having been given the ability to convert the entire world of nature into spiritual provision for himself, for he has to

develop himself intellectually by awakening his consciousness. When he does so, he finds truth at the level of personal discovery; the realization of God comes to him as he bows in self-prostration. Then he has to develop his personality to such a degree of moral refinement that he may be held deserving of finding a place in the vicinity of Almighty God. Those who fail to develop such a personality are mere animals in human form. They are worthless in the eyes of God. □

Man has been blessed in having been given the ability to convert the entire world of nature into spiritual provision for himself.



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RESPECT FOR HUMANITY IN ISLAM

Respect as a Birth Right

We have indeed honoured the Children of Adam, and provided for them means of transportation on land and sea, and given them wholesome food and exalted them high above the greater part of Our creation. (THE QURAN 17: 70)

THE above mentioned verse shows that man by his very creation deserves regard and respect. This respect is man's natural birthright, regardless of which community he belongs to. According to a Hadith: "That person is not one of us who is not merciful to our youngsters and respectful to our elders." According to another *Hadith* the Prophet Muhammad said: "One who believes in God and the Last Day must honour his neighbours; one who believes in God and the Last Day must honour his guests."

There are a number of such commands to the believers in the Quran and the Hadith which lay great stress on showing due respect to the servants of God. For, this is an important area in which we are actually

Our love and devotion for God finds expression in this world in the form of our relations with other human beings. One who is a true believer has an inner urge to love God's servants.

being tested in our faith in God. Our love and devotion for God finds expression in this world in the form of our relations with other human beings. One who is a true believer has an inner urge to love God's servants.

Respect for mankind is one of the basic teachings of Islam. Everyone whether of one's own religion or of any other religious tradition, whether belonging to one community or another to a friendly group or a group of strangers, is worthy of respect. According to the teachings of Islam human beings are to be respected despite their differences. Even

where antagonism is displayed, we have to adopt the way of avoidance of conflict and continue to show respectful behaviour. In the eyes of Islam, all human beings are equal and deserve our respect. □



CONFLICT-RESOLUTION

The Quranic Way

TODAY'S Muslims may know much about the divine rewards for reciting the Quran, but they are unaware of the immense reward for following the Quran in their own lives, although this is precisely the highest sort of reward that is associated with the Quran. The fact is that the solutions to all problems are contained in the Quran, but these solutions can work only for those who agree to accept them without any mental reservations.



Uthman ibn Affan narrates that the Prophet remarked that the best person is one who studies the Quran and teaches it to others (*Sahih Bukhari*). According to another *Hadith*, Umar ibn al-Khattab narrates that the Prophet said that God will elevate some people through His Book (*Sahih Muslim*).

Such *Hadith* reports indicate that the definite solution to all sorts of problems that Muslims may face is to obey the Quran. Muslims can and will gain protection by following the commandments of the Quran. This is a sure way for them to save themselves from all sorts of trials and afflictions.

If you ponder on the Quran, you will discover a basic guiding principle—that good and evil are not the same, and that in a seemingly difficult situation, one must respond using the best possible method. As a result of this, one's enemy will turn into a dear friend.

Muslims are very well aware of the rewards for reciting the Quran, but they do not know about the rewards for obeying the Quran.

As the Quran (41: 34) puts it:

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

Elaborating on this Quranic verse, Ibn Kathir reports that Abdullah ibn Abbas said:

God has commanded Muslims to exercise patience when they are angry, to express tolerance in the face of others' ignorance, and to exhibit mercy in the face of something that is wrong. When people act accordingly, God will save them from Satan,

and He will soften the hearts of the enemy for them, so that they become friends.

In this regard, Abdullah ibn Abbas, as reported in the *Tafsir al-Qurtubi* is also said to have remarked:

If someone behaves in an ignorant way with you, you must respond to his ignorance with tolerance.

The principle that the above-mentioned Quranic verse (41: 34) reveals is also the solution to the problem of inter-communal violence. That is to say, instead of reacting to provocation, one should adopt a positive approach and method. There is simply no other effective way. If there were, the problem would have been solved by now, because in the past all these other methods have been tried but they have failed miserably.

If Muslims adopt the method of sabr and avoidance in the face of provocation then this response will be like water over the fires of strife and war.

The only way to end communal violence involving Muslims is for Muslims to stop thinking in communal terms and, instead, to adopt the Quranic way of thinking. Muslims are very well aware of the rewards for reciting the Quran, but they do not know about the rewards for obeying the Quran. The Quranic

commandments are actually laws of nature, on the basis of which God has established the system that governs this world. It is by following these laws that the cosmic system is able to function perfectly. Similarly, it is by adhering to these laws that human beings can order their lives in the appropriate manner.

In the light of Quranic teachings, one can derive certain key principles of conflict-avoidance and conflict-resolution:

The need to properly investigate something that we happen to hear before taking action on it.

The Quran (49: 6) says:

Believers, if an evil-doer brings you news, ascertain the correctness of the report fully, lest you unwittingly harm others, and then regret what you have done [...]

Often, people get provoked and resort to violence on the basis of mere hearsay and rumour, without investigating the veracity of what they

have heard. Sometimes, what they hear is completely baseless, but by the time they realize this, it is too late: they have already taken to violence, resulting in much loss of life and property.

Defusing the situation.

The Quran instructs us that in the face of provocation, we must refrain from reacting and instead defuse the situation.

....Whenever they kindle the fire of war, God puts it out..... (5: 64)

In this verse, 'God puts it [the fire of violence] out', means that we must use the God given guidance of patience and avoidance in the face of such situations to restore peace instead of reacting to the provocation by fighting. If Muslims adopt the method of *sabr* and avoidance in the face of provocation then this response will be like water over the fires of strife and war. If instead Muslims react to the provocation with violence then the response will only add fuel to the fire.

In the manner in which bombs are disarmed, defused and made safe, Muslims should defuse the situations of violence and conflict. In ancient times, a common means of provocation was defilement with dirt and filth. In the sixth century CE, when King Abraha made an alternate and imitation Kaaba in Yemen and the Arabs defiled it, he was incensed and set out on a military campaign with a strong force of elephants to destroy the Kaaba in Arabia. In a similar case, when a stranger defiled the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, the Prophet instead of being provoked responded with patience and by cleaning the place the situation was defused. The stranger returned to his tribe and related this incident by proclaiming that, 'God is witness that in spite of me defiling the mosque, Muhammad did not censure or punish me.'

if Muslims instead react to the provocation with violence then the response will only add fuel to the fire.

There are many verses in the Quran that inspire Muslims towards *sabr* and avoidance. If Muslims adopt this Quranic method of defusing a situation, it will cut the very roots of inter-communal conflict.

The need to abstain from ignorant prejudice and provocation.

In the context of the Treaty of Hudaibiya, the Quran relates that when the Prophet's opponents displayed their prejudice against the Muslims, the believers did not respond in the same way. Rather, they remained

established in God-consciousness (48: 26). It was because the believers did not behave as their opponents did that the Treaty of Hudaibiya was possible. God termed this treaty as a 'clear victory'. Two years after this treaty, the whole of Arabia came under the sway of Islam.

If Muslims were to act according to this above-mentioned Quranic verse, all of a sudden their history would take a different turn. It would also put a complete end to communal violence. In many cases, communal riots break out because, in the face of the prejudiced ways of others, Muslims react in exactly the same way. This escalates the conflict, and then turns into rioting.

In many cases, Muslims have reacted to the provocation of others by expressing the same sort of prejudice themselves. But if, instead, they had adopted the method that the Quran recommends, their response would have been totally different. And then, many lives would have been saved.

The Prophet related that evil cannot be wiped out through evil. Rather, evil can be wiped out only through goodness.

According to a *Hadith* contained in the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad, Abdullah ibn Masud says that the Prophet related that evil cannot be wiped out through evil. Rather, evil can be wiped out only through goodness.

This *Hadith* expresses a divine principle. The entire world is governed by this principle, that every evil can be put to an end only through goodness. Had this not been the case, evil would have completely overwhelmed the world. Contrary to what Islam tells us to do, Muslims are today engaged in trying to put an end to evil by resorting to evil themselves. They want to end provocation by resorting to provocation, to end hate by resorting to hate, to end enmity by resorting to enmity, and to end communal prejudice by resorting to communal prejudice. All of this is completely against divine principles. Such efforts can never succeed. If Muslims insist on continuing this way, they will have to setup an imaginary world of their own liking, because they certainly cannot succeed in the real world in this manner . □



Intellectual Discovery

An intellectual discovery is the most thrilling experience.

MAN-MADE DWARFISM

Family Values

HUMAN babies are the most tender and weak of all the offspring of living creatures. Babies therefore, need their parents' care and guidance for their physical and mental growth. This is why nature has endowed parents with a special attraction for their offspring.

In the past, the separation of children from their parents was caused only by abnormal circumstances. In normal circumstances, it was taken for granted that children would enjoy the protection of their parents for as long as they required.

However, this exception has come to be a rule in modern advanced societies. This is the outcome of the modern concept of life which has destroyed the sanctity of matrimony. There are many cases where children are born out of wedlock or when the couples separate shortly after marriage. The result is the same in both cases—alienation of children from their parents, because they are “orphaned” during the lifetime of their parents.

The increasing incidence of this kind of ‘orphaning’ is creating complex problems in modern society, one of which has been termed “Deprivation Dwarfism” or “Psychosocial Dwarfism”. An excerpt from a report by medical experts on this subject says that, “Lack of love can stunt children’s physical growth, retard their intellect or even kill them.” Medical experts believe that unhappy home conditions can cause not only mental retardation in children but stunted physical growth as well.

The syndrome is known to affect both infants and children with symptoms that include decreased growth, very short stature, weight that is inappropriate for the height, and immature skeletal age. This disease is a progressive one, and as long as the child is left in the stressful environment, the child’s cognitive abilities continue to degenerate. Feeding difficulties in infancy and persistent sleep problems are other common findings.

Just as the human body can become dwarfed, so can the human spirit. The only cure for this condition is the tender, loving care which is engendered by love and family values. There is no substitute for it. □



NEW PHASE OF HISTORY

In the Spirit of the Age

ISLAM emerged in the seventh century following which and as result of the efforts of the followers of Islam, a revolution came about in the world. According to tradition, the Prophet of Islam had made a prediction of this revolution. In one report, the Prophet said: "There is no migration (*hijrat*) after the conquest (*fath*) of Makkah." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*)



In this *Hadith*, the words *hijrat* and *fath* are not meant in a temporary sense. Rather, they signify a change in age. This means that after the changes effected by the advent of Islam, a new period would dawn in the world. The model of the seventh century would become obsolete. That is, the sequence for any religious endeavour or practice that was employed in the case of Islam—migrating (*hijrath*) to another land and then engaging in armed *Jihad*—would be rendered unnecessary. The conditions which led to migration and war in the seventh century do not exist any longer. Freedom of thought and expression and the freedom of religion or belief is now considered a fundamental human right. In the present times, Muslims would be only required to carry out their religious duties and enterprises by keeping in mind the spirit of the age.

Similarly, the Prophet said: "When Khosrow is destroyed, there will be no Khosrow after him; and when Caesar is destroyed, there will be no Caesar after him." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*). Here, too, the words 'Khosrow' and 'Caesar' are used in a symbolic way. This means that the age of despotism has ended and will not come back again.

In this *Hadith* of the Prophet, using the language of prediction a historical fact has been expressed. And that is, following the emergence of Islam, despotism and imperialism will come to an end. In the ancient past, owing to monarchical rule and imperialist dynasties, religious movements faced persecution by government authorities. But in today's times religious movements will not face any such persecution. The planning of a religious movement will now be on a purely non-political basis. From start to finish, those working for a religious cause will get the opportunity to work in peaceful conditions, without any threat of violence. Now, until the Day of Judgment, no enterprise working purely for the sake of religion will have to face persecution of the kind such movements had to face earlier only for the reason that they had stood for a religion they believed to be true. □

HIGH THINKING

Objective Analysis

TODAY, people find themselves hemmed in by their immediate circumstances and conditions. The only meaningful way to handle this predicament is to maintain what is called 'high thinking'. You need to think rising above your immediate circumstances. You need to form your opinions from an objective analysis of things. You could say that this kind of thinking is 'thinking beyond the limits'.

All of us live amidst people. Every now and then, we face some sort of unpleasant experience at their hands. Very often, we react to these unpleasant experiences negatively, spurred on by negative emotions, such as anger, jealousy, hate, revenge, false superiority, false inferiority, and so on. Almost all of us spend our lives amidst these emotions.

These emotions, which are triggered off as a reaction, lead us to develop unrealistic thinking. And so, we deviate from the path set by nature and take to wrong paths.

The only way to succeed in this world is to think while rising above the conditions we are faced with, and to make decisions objectively, uninfluenced by negative emotions. We need to nurture what is called 'creative thinking'. Only then can we think properly, plan properly and act properly in this world and lead a truly successful life.

You need to think rising above your immediate circumstances. You need to form your opinions from an objective analysis of things.

High thinking is the greatest blessing a person can enjoy. The greatest obstacle to high thinking is distraction—that is, to allow the mind to stray off into multiple directions. We need to save ourselves from every sort of mental distraction so that we can be firmly established in healthy thinking.

It is healthy thinking that distinguishes man from animals. □



Sincere Person

*In the eyes of a sincere person,
pretensions lose their attraction.*

THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF RITUALS

Expression of Inner Spirit

WHAT is ritual? Ritual is a religious ceremony carried out in a prescribed order. Rituals are a part of every religion. In their absence, religion becomes an abstract philosophy. Philosophy with rituals is religion and religion without rituals is philosophy.

Rituals are not just a set of rites; in fact, they are the external expression of the inner content of religion. Religion begins as an inner spirit but this spirit must always have an external manifestation. It is this externalization of the inner spirit which is called ritual.

Ritual without spirit is a diluted form of religion like a nutshell without a kernel. True, the shell does also have some value, but the kernel is the most important part. Rituals are important, but they are like a body which becomes lifeless when there is no spirit.

There are two levels of religion. One is that in which spirit and rituals or form, both have their distinct values. That is the ideal version of religion. The other level is that in which religion is characterized by rituals without there being apparently any inner spirit.

Religion always begins from consciousness. This consciousness gradually, or sometimes even suddenly, expresses itself in the form of rituals. Consciousness is the real source of rituals.

Sometimes religion is in its ideal form, that is, ritual and spirit go hand-in-hand. But this ideal state cannot be maintained at all times. There can be aberrations in the practice of religion. Sometimes it happens that form or rituals are present but the spirit is absent, at least temporarily.

Religion in this latter state is at a minimum level. But this minimum state is not totally worthless. It also has its value and, indeed, has a very important role to play. It maintains the consciousness of religion and keeps one mindful of it.

This minimum role of rituals can be described as a reminder of spirit through routine. When you observe the rituals at their prescribed times, it reminds you that rituals should be performed keeping in mind their inner content, that is, their spirit.

Rituals might appear as a mere form but one should understand that form symbolizes the inner spirit. If the inner spirit has real value, rituals have symbolic value, and both are equally important.

Rituals, the external aspect of the inner spirit, help maintain the inner spirit. Without them the spirit would be reduced to an abstract idea. In such a situation, ritual, or form, serves the role of a compulsory or a regular reminder.

There is a scientific relationship between the spirit and form. The spirit, when externalized, is not an entirely detached phenomenon. It is very much attached to inner consciousness. Without inner consciousness, no one can perform external rituals. Both are complementary to each other.

If the inner spirit has real value, then rituals have symbolic value and both are equally important.

It is difficult to understand the inner spirit without external rituals or external rituals without inner consciousness. Religion always begins from consciousness. This consciousness gradually, or sometimes even suddenly, expresses itself in the form of rituals. Consciousness is the real source of rituals.

An important role that ritual plays is to give a religion an identity without which religion would remain only an abstract idea. □



Keep The Mind Positive

Man lives in this world in the midst of problems and negativities. The mind thinks of all these things and stores them up. We cannot prevent the mind from doing this. All we can do is to prevent these things in the mind from being effective. One should stop oneself from bringing these things again and again to the mind.

THE SIGNS OF HYPOCRISY

Weak Personality

IT is narrated by Abdullah bin Amr that the Prophet of Islam said: "There are four traits and if anyone has them he is surely a hypocrite, and if any person has any one of them, he still reveals the flaw of hypocrisy unless he renounces it. They are: he betrays the trust of others; he speaks falsehood; he does not keep his promises; and when differences arise, he will not hesitate to fight."

This *Hadith* outlines the character of a hypocrite. A hypocrite is one who becomes insensitive in matters of truth and falsehood, because he does not fear God. Such a person becomes unprincipled. Having no sense of accountability, he is obedient not to the principles of truth but to his self-interest. He does not attach any importance to moral values.

As a result, if such a person is entrusted with anything, he breaks his trust. When he talks, he does not bind himself to speak the truth. He speaks easily such things that are at variance with facts. Such a man is not true to his word, and he breaks his promises easily after they are made.

A hypocrite is one who becomes insensitive in matters of truth and falsehood, because he does not fear God.

Similarly, when such a man finds himself in the midst of controversy or develops some difference with others, he fails to maintain himself on justice. Instead of talking in a scientific and logical manner, he starts making accusations. Instead of entering into serious discussion, he behaves in a quarrelsome manner. Instead of keeping the dialogue within the limits of logic, he abuses his interlocutor. Instead of making scientific

analysis, he passes negative remarks. Instead of remaining in touch with reality, he talks on the basis of guesswork. Instead of limiting himself to the issue at hand, he starts talking on the basis of assumptions. Instead of discussing the matter on the basis of principles, he brings personal considerations into the matter. Finally, he accuses his adversary of saying something that he has never spoken of. And to support his stand, he uses rumours that have no truth.

These traits of a hypocrite that are mentioned in the *Hadith* are an extremely serious matter. One who cultivates any of these characteristics will find a weak personality developing within him. A

further loss of such a person is that he will be deprived of the divine company of angels. He will not be a recipient of divine inspirations. He will not receive any spiritual nourishment. He will be deprived of a relationship with God. Such a person's intellectual development will come to a standstill. He will be denied the blessing of purification. The light of faith will fail to reach him.

A weak personality will always be under the influence of Satan. On the other hand a strong personality will continue to have divine experiences as mentioned in the Quran: 'As for those who affirm, Our Lord is God, and then remain steadfast, the angels will descend on them, saying, 'Have no fear and do not grieve. Rejoice in the [good news of the] Garden that you have been promised. (41: 30) □

One who cultivates any of the characteristics of a hypocrite will find a weak personality developing within him.



Patience in Social & Family Life

Patience means to think by rising above complaints. Patience is not cowardice or defeat. When you have an unpleasant experience with someone and become negative, this means you did not keep patience. If you ignore what hurts you, you raise your level. So, patience means to raise your intellectual level. Patience is not passivity. It is another name for high thinking.

JOURNEY AFTER DEATH

Eternal Joy or Eternal Suffering

WHAT is Death? Dictionaries often define death as 'the permanent cessation of life'. This definition reflects a negative image of death. It seems to suggest that death means the complete extinguishing of a living being after its having been alive on earth for a short while. It is as if when one dies, one ceases to exist forever.

In contrast to this, Islam presents a positive understanding of death. Islam teaches us that death is not the end of life. Rather, it marks the beginning of a new phase of our lives.

According to Islam, man has been created as an eternal being. His life-span has been divided into two parts. The first is the pre-death phase; and the second is the post-death phase.

Whatever good you need to do to earn yourself a good life after death, you should do it today, because tomorrow you may no longer be alive.

The pre-death phase of our lives is a time for us to make preparations for our post-death phase, the life that is to come after we die. The post-death phase is where we will reap the results of all that we had done in the pre-death phase of our lives.

As per God's Creation Plan, the phase before death is our preparatory period. Accordingly, in this period we should focus completely on preparing ourselves for the eternal life to come after death. We should know that in the post-death phase that we will have to face one day, we will not have the chance to do any actions that can be of any use to us. In that phase of our life, we will only reap the fruits, sweet or bitter, of what we had sowed in our pre-death phase.

Death is a message from life, as it were. The message is "Whatever good you need to do to earn yourself a good life after death, you should do it today, because tomorrow you may no longer be alive". □

The Nature Of Man

When the inner man is awakened it is no longer within an individual's power to be cruel or unjust.

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**

When your Lord said to the angels, 'I am putting a successor on earth,' they said, 'Will You place someone there who will cause corruption on it and shed blood, while we glorify You with Your praise and extol Your holiness?' [God] answered, 'Surely, I know that which you do not know.' (2: 30)

The literal meaning of *khalifah* or caliph is one who takes another's place— a successor. In the age of hereditary rule, it was generally used for a monarch who took the place of his predecessor. According to this usage, the word came to refer to one invested with power. When God created man to dwell on earth, He decreed that he might enjoy freedom of will. The angels became apprehensive of man being corrupted by this grant of power and free will and, as a consequence, spreading evil and causing bloodshed in the world. History showed that their fears were well founded. God was also fully aware of this possibility. But He had a particular reason for investing man with power and freedom on earth. If many human beings were to be corrupted by their power, there would also be a substantial number who, in spite of their power and freedom on earth, would acknowledge God's greatness and power and their own helplessness. Such people would, of their own free will, adopt the path of submission and obedience to God. Although comparatively few in number, they would be specially prized above all others. They would be just like the food grains at harvest time, which, although greatly outweighed in bulk by chaff and straw, are the truly valued part of the crop. (Indeed if the chaff and straw are permitted to grow, it is solely so that people may have access to grain.)

He taught Adam all the names, then He set them before the angels and said, 'Tell Me the names of these, if what you say be true.' They said, 'Glory be to You; we have no knowledge except whatever You

have taught us. You are the All Knowing, the All Wise.’ Then He said, ‘O Adam, tell them their names.’ When Adam had told them the names, God said to the angels, ‘Did I not say to you: I know the secrets of the heavens and of the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you conceal?’ (2: 31-33)

The mixture of good and evil in mankind became evident when God, in His omnipotence, brought all the progeny of Adam before their first father. He said to the angels, ‘Look, these are the progeny of Adam. Can you give me the name of each one of them, and say what sort of people they will be?’ The angels, having no knowledge of them, were unable to answer. Then God told Adam their names and characteristics, and then commanded him to pass the knowledge on to the angels. When Adam had explained to them the nature of the human race, they realized that, besides the wicked and the corrupt, there would also be among their number great, righteous and pious souls.

Man’s greatest crimes, after the denial of his Lord, are spreading corruption and causing bloodshed in the world. Neither an individual nor a group has God’s permission to indulge in such actions as may disrupt the order of nature established by God. For example, no man should take the life of another: all actions of this nature disqualify mankind from receiving God’s mercy. In short, preserving the system of nature is ‘to reform’ it, while upsetting this system is equal ‘to spreading corruption’.

When We said to the angels, ‘Bow down before Adam,’ they all bowed except for Iblis [Satan]. He refused and acted proudly and became an unbeliever. We said, ‘O Adam! Live with your wife in Paradise and eat freely from it anywhere you may wish. Yet do not approach this tree lest you become wrongdoers.’ But Satan caused them both to slip through this and thus brought about the loss of their former state. We said, ‘Go down from here as enemies to each other; and on earth you shall have your abode and your livelihood for a while!’ (2: 34-36)

When God made Adam stand up in front of the angels including Iblis (Satan), and tested them by commanding them to bow down before Adam, He was giving the first man on earth a practical demonstration of the two paths that would be open to his progeny. Either they would follow the example of the angels and bow to God’s commandments, even if it meant bowing before someone they held inferior to themselves; or else they would be proud like Satan, and refuse to bow to others. This is the test that man faces throughout his entire life. Here on earth man is constantly faced with two alternative courses of

action. He can either follow the course set by the angels and carry out God's commandments by bowing before truth and justice in all that he does; or he can act as Satan did and, letting himself be controlled by arrogance and contempt, refuse to concede the right of others.

Then Adam received some words [of prayer] from his Lord and He accepted his repentance. He is the Forgiving One, the Merciful. We said, 'Go down, all of you, from here: then when guidance comes to you from Me, anyone who follows My guidance will have no fear, nor will they grieve—those who deny and reject Our signs shall be the inhabitants of the Fire; therein shall they abide forever.'(2: 37-39)

The practical lesson of the forbidden tree demonstrates how man goes astray by letting himself be deceived by Satan, and exceeding the bounds that God has laid down for him. As soon as he eats of the 'forbidden fruit', he is deprived of God's grace or, in other words, Paradise. But this loss is not an irretrievable one. Man still has an opportunity to turn in repentance to his Lord, rectify his actions and seek forgiveness for his sins. When he turns to the Lord in repentance, God relents towards him, and cleanses him of his sins, as if he had never committed them.

The preacher of truth is an 'Adam'; it is for people to bow before him. If, carried away by pride and prejudice, they refuse to acknowledge his position, they are following in Satan's footsteps. Such a denial amounts to having failed the test devised for man by God.

God does not become plainly visible in this world; He reveals Himself through His signs, thereby testing His creatures. It is only those who can interpret His signs who will discover God Himself. □



Responsibility

A person is born under the laws of nature, but after birth, the development of his personality lies in his own hands.

ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered



Q&A With Maulana Wahiduddin Khan on Anti-Muslim Sentiments.

In recent years, there's been an escalation of anti-Muslim sentiments in many countries. In parts of the West, for instance, there have been cases of Muslims being turned away from restaurants, of Muslims being physically and verbally abused, and of being asked to get off a plane because someone else wrongly suspected and accused them of being terrorists, of Muslim women being dismissed from workplaces because they insist on wearing the hijab, of local non-Muslims protesting against plans for building mosques, and so on. The latest such development is in France, with the ban on what are called burkinis in many French cities.

What do you think are the reasons for these growing anti-Muslim sentiments?

The answer to this question can be found by studying a verse in the Quran. "And beware of an affliction that will not smite exclusively those among you who have done wrong." (8: 25)

If we study this Quranic verse and objectively apply it to the present situation of Muslims, we realize that what is happening in the world today is not due to "anti-Muslim sentiment". Rather it is a reaction to Muslims' own negative activities.

Muslims say that instances of terrorism are perpetrated only by some Muslims, and not the whole Muslim community. This claim of Muslims could be right, but another serious aspect of this matter is that Muslims to this day have not unequivocally disowned Muslim terrorism. I don't know of a single person in the entire Muslim world who openly condemns Muslims' negative activities. If any person does speak on this topic, he would speak with twists. For example, some would say, 'It is true that Muslims are involved in terrorist activities, but this action of theirs is a reaction: they are reacting to others' discriminatory behaviour towards them.' This kind of condemnation is certainly not condemnation. It is akin to indirectly justifying the violent actions of Muslims. Objective analysis tells us that such instances that you cite are certainly not discrimination. They are a result of Muslims'

own doubtful behaviour. Muslims are themselves responsible for this discrimination. According to a *Hadith*, the Prophet said: "Save yourself from being regarded as objectionable." Because Muslims do not outrightly disown the actions of those Muslims who are engaged in wrong actions, others in the community will also face 'discrimination'. If Muslims were to clearly condemn the actions of those who are doing wrong, then only those specific persons who are guilty of the wrong would face the above kind of response, which is termed 'discrimination' or 'anti-Muslim sentiment'.

Some Muslims may respond to displays of anti-Muslim sentiment by protesting against them and denouncing what they say is discrimination against them. They might, for instance, campaign for a boycott of a restaurant where Muslims have been turned out from. Or, they may demand that an airline company whose employees had made a Muslim passenger disembark from a plane, wrongly suspecting him to be a terrorist, should issue an apology. Or, they may insist that countries pass stricter laws to counter anti-Muslim discrimination. What do you think of this approach to countering or overcoming anti-Muslim sentiments?

These cases are due to the law of nature. The solution to them is not that countries pass anti-Muslim discrimination laws. There are only two options before Muslims. First, they should declare that they are not a single community. The case of every individual Muslim is separate and distinct. Thus, if anything happens with a Muslim, Muslims as a whole should not make it their own case but should look at it only as the case of a particular person. However, if Muslims cannot take this option and do consider themselves as a single community or *ummah*, they should condemn, in clear terms, those among them who engage in negative activities. If they do not condemn these persons, then the rest of the world would surely infer from the wrong actions of these particular Muslims that the entire Muslim community is responsible, because Muslims themselves say that all Muslims are members of a single *ummah* or community.

Such instances of discrimination as you have cited in your question happen on a regular basis with secular persons, but the rest of the secular world does not look at it as a matter of the "secular community". In the secular world, each person is looked upon as distinct. There is no "secular *ummah*". So, when such cases happen with secular persons, the sentiments of secular people do not get hurt, because secular people do not regard themselves as a single community. They regard this as a problem pertaining to those specific individuals. But when such cases

happen with Muslims, the sentiments of the entire Muslim community get hurt. What happens with one Muslim affects the whole of the Muslim community. This is why when one Muslim performs a wrong action, the world begins to doubt other Muslims too. In order to avoid this, either Muslims should very strongly condemn those individual Muslims among them who are doing wrong, or, if not this, they should abandon the concept of the *ummah*: that is, every Muslim's case is his own and what he does has nothing to do with other Muslims.

How effective do you think this approach that many Muslims advocate—of protesting against what is termed 'Islamophobia'—might be in changing the hearts and minds of people who may have negative views of Muslims?

This approach of Muslims cannot change others' views about Muslims. The only way to change this situation is that Muslims should reform themselves. Demanding others to change cannot at all be of any use in this regard.

If you don't think this approach is effective in this regard, what alternate approach do you think Muslims should adopt to help others change their opinions about Muslims and Islam?

The starting-point in this matter is that all those who are representatives of Muslims should openly disown Muslims' terrorist activities. They should prevent Muslims from engaging in terrorism, and if this is not possible for them, then they should clearly condemn these actions by Muslims.

Complaining against and denouncing anti-Muslim sentiments represents one approach that seeks to improve relations between Muslims and others. It is a negative approach, in that it is against something. But there is a very different approach to the issue—a positive approach based on seeking to improve others' perceptions of Muslims and Islam by doing good to others, serving them and being kind and helpful to them, even in the face of discrimination from them. This is a constructive approach, in contrast to the first one. It is about doing something positive, instead of denouncing something negative.

Which of these two approaches would you suggest Muslims should adopt and why?

The only way to change the perception of people about Islam and Muslims is for the representatives of Muslims to condemn the wrong actions of Muslims. For example, all *ulema* should collectively issue a *fatwa* unconditionally denouncing the negative activities of Muslims. □

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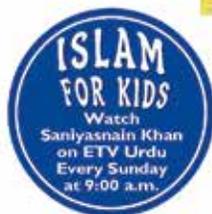
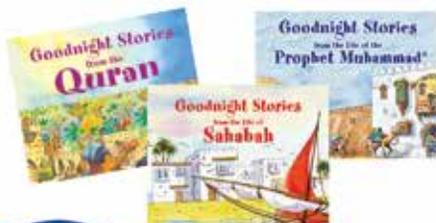
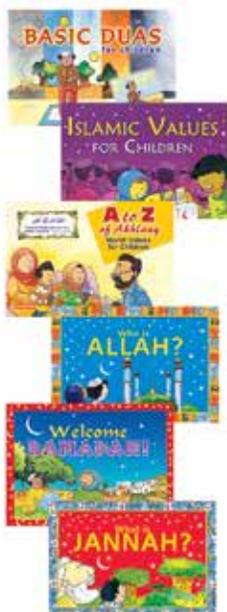
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