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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



The price of success is long term endeavour.

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

Spirit of Islam is a monthly magazine which is now in its sixth year of publication. The aim of this journal is to present Islam in the contemporary idiom, while at the same time the contents are of universal appeal and of interest to a wider circle of spiritual seekers. It is our desire to help Muslims rediscover Islam, focusing on its message of peace and spirituality as derived from the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet, and in general we strive towards religious understanding for bringing about greater harmony.

Another purpose of this magazine is to assist its readers to deal with life's challenges, deriving positivity even from negative occurrences, gaining in spirituality and developing themselves intellectually so that they may contribute constructively to society.

The magazine's regular readers will appreciate that the entire thrust of its articles is directed to the individual—a collection of intellectually prepared individuals being the sole foundation on which a peaceful and harmonious society can be built.

As the subtitle indicates, *Spirit of Islam* is working towards enlightening people on the subject of global peace and regularly addresses relevant contemporary issues. The articles on peace based on the teachings of the Prophet of Islam offer us an ideology of peace—principles which lay down how peace may be established between conflicting groups, controversies resolved and conflicts defused. We believe that violence begins in the mind and so an effective ideology of peace needs to be presented to counter its influence.

We hope and pray that God helps us in this noble endeavour and grants us His special blessings!



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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

ISSUE 68 AUGUST 2018

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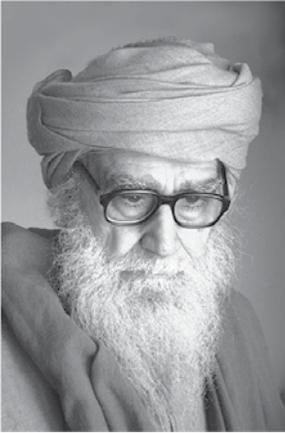
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, born in 1925, in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, is an Islamic spiritual scholar who is well-versed in both classical Islamic learning and modern disciplines. The mission of his life has been the establishment of worldwide peace. He has received the Padma Bhushan, the Demiurgus Peace International Award and Sayyidina Imam Al Hassan Peace award for promoting peace in Muslim societies. He has been called 'Islam's spiritual ambassador to the world' and is recognized as one of its most influential Muslims¹. His books have been translated into sixteen languages and are part of university curricula in six countries. He is the founder of the Centre for Peace and Spirituality based in New Delhi.

RELIGIOUS BASE PLUS OBJECTIVE THINKING

AFTER the death of my father, there was no elder in the family. The elder in the extended family was my uncle, Sufi Abdul Majeed Khan, who was my father's younger brother. He was a spiritual person. As everyone in the family was acquiring secular education, he wanted one of us to become a *Maulvi* or a religious scholar. Due to this obsession, my uncle got me enrolled in a *madrasa*, an Islamic seminary, and bore all the expenses. The credit of my seminary education goes to him.

At my *madrasa*, the Quran was considered the most important book. *Hadith* (teachings of the Prophet) was also taught and we had an Arab scholar who taught Arabic. This was the atmosphere of my *madrasa*. *Madrasa* education helped build my foundation. Had I not gone to a *madrasa*, I would not have formed a religious base.

In every person's life there are many incidents of school days. There are many in mine too. I will share one of them, which had a great impact on my life. One day in class, we read a lesson from our textbook, which

1. The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims 2018, Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Jordan.

contained the following verse of the Quran: "Do they never reflect on the camels and how they were created?" (88: 17)

Our teacher then asked a question to our class of twenty-five students: "Are the hoofs of a camel like that of a horse or a buffalo?" No student could answer the question. He then told us something really important. He quoted an Arabic saying: *To know that you do not know is half of knowledge.* That is, when you know that you do not know something, you pay attention to it whenever you come face to face with it. He further explained that since all of us did not know that we did not know about a camel's hoofs, we never paid attention even when camels went past us.

Later on, while studying science, I realized this is what we call the spirit of inquiry. Our teacher told us about the importance of the spirit of inquiry through an Arabic saying. Since then, I was filled with the spirit of inquiry and I continue to do it to this day. The spirit of inquiry therefore is an important part of my life. And this I learnt at my *madrasa*.

After acquiring education at a *madrasa* I returned home and would often interact with a family friend, Ateeq Ahmad Ansari, who had a Master's degree in English Literature from Lucknow's La Martiniere College. His English was obviously very good, and so every time we conversed, I would feel lesser than him in some manner. Compared

Make yourself free from arrogance, bias and hatred, only then will you become a person who can be described as a man of understanding.

to his English expression I felt mine to be somewhat lacking. I realized that if I have to live in this world, I would have to study English and acquire modern knowledge. This is how I started studying, and later on modern thought became my subject of study. I studied modern thought extensively and deeply. It was therefore the realization that *madrasa* education is not enough that took me back to studies. Post *madrasa* education, I read the Quran and *Hadith* again with a new perspective and studied English for several

years. Then I moved to Delhi in 1967. Here began a new chapter of my life. In fact my life can be divided into two phases: the phase before 1967, which was a period of self-training. And the phase after 1967 became a period of the peace mission.

The greatest thing I acquired from studying modern thought was objective thinking. I had not learned this at the *madrasa*. As a result of my study, I grew acutely objective. I discovered that traditional

knowledge and concepts would not appeal to the modern mind. To address the modern mind, we will have to speak in the modern idiom.

Objective thinking is very important to understand things in the right perspective. The mind should be disciplined to develop this skill. For doing this you need to think rising above immediate circumstances. You need to form opinions from an objective analysis of things. If you want to be a right thinker you have to train yourself and develop this quality. An objective thinker is a right thinker. One who is free of all kinds of bias and prejudice. You must have the ability to analyze things in a logical basis. You must know the difference between what is relevant and what is irrelevant.

Objective thinking is very important to understand things in the right perspective. The mind should be disciplined to develop this skill.

Make yourself a complex-free person and then you will be able to understand things without any difficulty. Make yourself free from arrogance, bias and hatred, only then will you become a person who can be described as a man of understanding. It is evident that people of understanding are not born; they are trained. Train yourself and you will become a man of understanding. □

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FROM THE EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Dr. Farida Khanam has been a professor at the Department of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi. A Study of World's Major Religions, A Simple Guide to Sufism are two of the books amongst many others, of which she is the author. She has also translated many books on Islam authored by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. Currently, the chairperson of Centre for Peace and Spirituality (CPS International), an organization founded by her father Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, she is a regular contributor of articles to journals, newspapers and magazines. Dr. Khanam has edited Maulana's English translation of the Quran and has also translated his Urdu commentary of the Quran into English. Under Maulana Wahiduddin Khan Peace Foundation, along with the CPS team, she has designed a series of courses on peace-building, countering extremism and conflict resolution.

HAJJ—THE PILGRIMAGE

HAJJ or pilgrimage is one of the five pillars of Islam. The Prophet observed: "There are five basic pillars of Islam. To bear testimony that there is no deity save Allah, and that Muhammad is His Prophet; to say prayers regularly and pay the poor due, to make a pilgrimage to the house of God, and fast during the month of Ramazan.

The root meaning of the word "Hajj" is 'to set out' or to make a pilgrimage. Canonically it has come to refer to a Muslim act of worship, performed annually in the month of *Zul Hijjah*, the twelfth month of the lunar calendar.

To perform Hajj is incumbent at least once in a lifetime, upon every Muslim, who is an adult, free, in good health and has sufficient money for the expenses of the journey. Women have to be accompanied by a close relative like husband, father, son or brother.

Among all Muslim acts of worship, Hajj holds a prominent position. In one *Hadith*, the Prophet called it "the supreme act of worship". But it is not just the rites of pilgrimage that constitute this importance, it is the spirit in which Hajj is performed. Let us put this another way and say that it is not merely a matter of going to Makkah and returning. There is much more to Hajj than that. Hajj has been prescribed so that it may inspire us with a new religious fervour. To return from Hajj with one's faith in God strengthened and rekindled—that is the hallmark of a true pilgrim. Hajj assumes a supreme act of worship when it is undertaken

in its true spirit, and performed in the proper manner. It will then be the greatest act in a pilgrim's life, he will never be the same again.

To go on Hajj is to meet God. When the pilgrim reaches the border of the sacred territory, he is filled with awe of God, he feels that he is leaving his own world, and entering God's. He feels he is revolving around Him, running towards Him, journeying on His behalf, making a sacrifice in His name, praying to the Lord and seeing his prayers answered.

The House of God in Makkah is one of God's signs on earth. The souls which have strayed from the Lord take comfort in Him once again; hearts which have become hard as stone are brought low before Almighty God; eyes which have lost their vision are filled with divine radiance. But these blessings of Hajj are available only to those who come prepared for them. Otherwise Hajj will be just a tour, a visit which leaves no lasting impression upon the traveller.

The blessings of Hajj are available only to those who come prepared for them. Otherwise Hajj will be just a tour, a visit which leaves no lasting impression upon the traveller.

The pilgrims gather on the plain of Arafat in order to recall the time when they will gather on the plain of the Last Day. It is to conjure up visions in this world of what they will experience in practice in the next world.

The Prophet Muhammad said: "Hajj is to stand in the plains of Arafat." This shows how important it is to visit Arafat and to spend time there. The plain of Arafat, where the pilgrims spend one whole day is like a picture of the Day of Reckoning. Believers come in from all sides to witness the spectacle. All are clad in a simple garment. There is nothing to make anyone stand out from the rest. All recite the same words: "Here we are at your service, Lord." Anyone who sees this spectacle must be reminded of this verse from the Quran:

The trumpet will be blown and, at once they will rise up from their graves, and hasten to their Lord. (36: 51)

For all these reasons, Hajj reigns supreme among all acts of devotion. Just as the sacred mosque in Makkah has a station above all other mosques, so the worship that is performed there—as part of the pilgrimage—stands head and shoulders above all other acts of devotion. □

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GRATITUDE

To God and Man

One who does not express his gratitude to other human beings will never be thankful to God. —Prophet Muhammad

THANKFULNESS is a state of mind which cannot be compartmentalized. If it manifests itself in one place, the chances are that it will do so in other places too. If a man shows gratitude to one person, he will surely show it to others likewise.

When a man does someone a good turn, it is something quite obvious—a tangible direct experience. On the contrary, God's kindness, being an indirect experience, is not at all obvious. One has to be perceptive, and reflective to be able to realize the favours granted to man by God. While the favours a man does are observable, God's favours can be realized only by thinking about them.

Failing at first to acknowledge the favours of one's fellow men leads on to failure to give wholehearted credence to the Lord of the Universe.

One who fails to perceive an event which is directly observable cannot be expected to grasp something which can be apprehended only after a great deal of cogitation.

If the recipient of a favour fails to acknowledge it for fear of belittling himself in the eyes of his benefactor, he does himself nothing but harm. It is more a question of being belittled in the eyes of his own conscience than falling down in others' eyes—a course by far the more injurious.

An even greater disadvantage of an ungrateful attitude is that it produces a mentality of non-acknowledgement. Failing at first to acknowledge the favours of one's fellow men leads on to failure to give wholehearted credence to the Lord of the Universe. There is no greater loss in this world than one who has failed to acknowledge his Creator. □



*Self-knowledge is the beginning
of self-improvement.*

THE QURAN AND SUNNAH

Its Relevance in Modern Times

EVERY religion revealed by God was, in its original form, eternal in character, just as the sun and the moon have a timeless character about them. Religion, in fact, is another name for eternal values, which in their nature are timeless and uniformly applicable in all situations and at all times.

A religion loses its relevance in succeeding ages when it is no longer preserved in its pristine form owing to human additions and interpolations. The Prophet of Islam, who came in the 7th century, did not bring a new religion. His mission in fact was aimed at sifting the divinely revealed parts from the human additions which had crept into the ancient religions over the ages. The divine religion thus needed to be established in its original form. This reality has been expressed thus in the Quran:

A religion loses its relevance in succeeding ages when it is no longer preserved in its pristine form owing to human additions and interpolations.

"Also for those who follow the Messenger—the unlettered prophet they find described in the Torah that is with them, and in the Gospel—who commands them to do right and forbids them to do wrong, who makes good things lawful to them and bad things unlawful, who will relieve them of their burdens and of the shackles that weigh upon them. Those that believe in him and honour him those that aid him and follow the light sent down with him, shall surely triumph." (7: 157)

In this verse "burden" and "shackles" mean human addition. It is these human additions which make a religion irrelevant in succeeding ages. When a religion is purified of human additions, the question of irrelevance with time automatically vanishes. Since Islam is free from additions, there is no possibility of Islam being irrelevant at any time or in any situation. In fact the commands given in Islam are totally timeless in character. As the Quran says:

God has ordained for you the same religion which He enjoined on Noah, and which We have revealed to you, and which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus, so that you should remain steadfast in religion and not become divided in it. (42: 13)

In this verse the believers are commanded to follow those teachings of religion which were given to all prophets. These are: monotheism, developing sincerity, inculcating good virtues, having a noble character, and doing good deeds for the Hereafter. We learn from this verse that there are four parts of religious teachings sent down by God. One part encompasses all that is common to all the prophets sent to any part of the world. These teachings do not change with the changing times. These are the basic essence of religion. If we have to follow this real part of religion, the question of relevance or irrelevance does not arise, whatever the age, for its tenets are based on eternal values.

There is no conflict between the teachings of Islam and the demands of modern times. Islam is practicable in the modern age in the full sense of the word.

Another part of God's religion covers *Shariah* (Law) and *Minhaj* (Method). In this second part of the teachings some concessions had to be made according to the age and situation in which the teachings were revealed. That is why the prophets were given different *Shariah* at different times.

In the above verse, *Shariah* means detailed law and *Minhaj* means its method. Since these two things relate very much to circumstances, they change with the changing situations. For instance, the principle of marriage between

Adam's sons and daughters was different from the principles given to other prophets. Similarly, the respective political methods followed by the Prophets Joseph and Moses were different from one another. This difference was due to the difference in time and circumstances.

If we look at the teachings of Islam from this angle, we shall find that there is no conflict between these teachings and the demands of modern times and that Islam is practicable in the modern age in the full sense of the word.

The real and basic demand of Islam is that man should believe in one God. He should worship Him alone. He should embody truth, honesty, justice and other moral values. In short, within his own private sphere, he should fully obey God. Obviously, these teachings of Islam do not clash with the demands of modern times, which are equally practicable today.

Another part of Islam pertains to social laws, for instance, deterrent punishments. These kinds of laws similarly do not clash with the demands of modern times. For commandments such as these do not mean that Muslims should start implementing these commands

in whatever circumstances they find themselves. On the contrary, the prerequisite for the enforcement of these commands is that first of all they should be acceptable in society. As long as they remain unacceptable they will remain in abeyance.

Then there is *Minhaj*, that is, method. In this field also there is no clash between Islam and modern times. For, in social matters Islam will adopt whatever method is worthy of being implemented according to the spirit of the age. For instance, no attempt will be made to impose the system of caliphate by force in a country which has a democratic system. Rather by cooperating with the times, peaceful Islamic *dawah* work will be performed. That is demonstrated in the lives of the various prophets. In such matters, there is no single method which emerged among the prophets or the pious Caliphs.

We deduce an important principle from an incident in the life of the Prophet of Islam. A person named Musaylama rose in Yemen, who falsely claimed to be God's prophet and to have been appointed as co-prophet along with the Prophet Muhammad. Musaylama sent a two-member delegation to Madinah to meet the Prophet of Islam and asked him to acknowledge his prophethood. The Prophet asked the delegates what opinion they had about Musaylama regarding his claim to prophethood. They said that they believed in his claim. At this the Prophet of Islam replied that, had there been no rule in this world that envoys should not be harmed, he would have had both of them killed. (*Seerat ibn Hisham*)

The real and basic demand of Islam is that man should believe in one God. He should worship Him alone.

From this incident in the life of the Prophet of Islam, we learn a very important principle of *Shariah*. That is, if a principle is generally accepted, at the international level, then the relevant Islamic principle will also be the same as that of other nations. This decision of the Prophet of Islam shows that in matters of age-old customs, the law of the believers as well as of other nations would not be separate, provided the matter in hand did not pertain to some unlawful act, for instance, the eating of pork. It is obvious that if Islam followed this principle in international matters, then there would be no conflict or clash in the practical sense between Islam and other nations in respect of changing times.

One important teaching of Islam is that, with the exception of matters of worship and beliefs, no command is absolute so far as social matters

are concerned. Commands can change with changes in place and time. The *Shariah* law can be changed as per the rule framed by our jurists. *Commands change with the change of time and place.* This teaching establishes at the outset that in no circumstance should we clash with the times. Rather, in keeping with the demand of the times we are free to carve out our path. In such a situation there is no possibility of Islam ever appearing to be irrelevant with the change of time. Obviously, when we are not supposed to go against circumstances, how could Islam ever become irrelevant due to the changed situation?

From a study of the Prophet's life we may deduce the important congregational principle that Islam does not encourage us to clash with the prevailing political *status quo* but urges us instead to pursue our

Muslims have been commanded, in no uncertain terms, that in any circumstance and in any age when they find political corruption among the rulers, they must sedulously refrain from opting for a policy of confrontation with them.

goal by accepting the *status quo*. This teaching solves the problem of Islam ever becoming irrelevant with the changing times. A system becomes irrelevant only when it is at variance with the changing times. When there is no such clash, the question of irrelevance does not arise at all.

The guidance of the Prophet of Islam has been gathered together in books of *Hadith*, one part of which is found in *Kitab al-Fitan*. In these teachings, Muslims have been commanded, in no uncertain terms, that in any circumstance and in any age when they find political corruption among the rulers, they must sedulously refrain from opting for a policy of confrontation with them. Totally

avoiding political confrontation with them, they must continue working in non-controversial spheres, for instance, in the fields of education, *dawah*, economics, social work, etc. The aim of this teaching of the Prophet is to make Islam relevant at all times.

The actual target of Islam is the intellectual, spiritual and moral rectification of the individual. This task is wholly related to the sphere of individual freedom. Today the principle has been accepted all over the world that every individual has been granted full freedom in his own personal sphere. He is free to think and act as he likes. This is the actual sphere of Islamic action. And when in this sphere where every individual is granted total freedom, no objection can be raised that Islam has lost its relevance in modern times.

Another sphere of human action is that which concerns social matters. This is the sphere in which confrontation takes place, raising the question of relevance and irrelevance. Islamic teaching for this sphere is action in accordance with circumstances. If circumstances are not conducive for action, we have to follow the path of persuasion and counselling, strictly adhering to peaceful means.

There are also certain matters where the teachings of Islam apparently go against the prevalent custom. For instance, the justification of wine, interest-based economy, deterrent punishment, etc. The teachings of Islam in such matters are clearly different from the prevalent custom of modern times. And as we know, the majority today is not at the moment willing to accept the teaching of Islam in these matters.

This would appear to show that Islam has become irrelevant in modern times. But it is not right to draw this conclusion in haste. It is true that the teachings of Islam in social matters are different from the custom of the age. But this is a matter pertaining to ideological differences. Islam does not enjoin its followers to set about changing the *status quo* at the first instance, in order to replace it with the Islamic system. The teaching of Islam in this matter is to opt for the way of patience. That is, refraining completely from launching oneself on a collision course and instead communicating one's point of view to others in the language of persuasion. In this way an atmosphere can be created which is favourable to Islam and the relevance of Islam can be proved purely on a rational basis, so that it may find acceptance in due course.

The actual target of Islam is the intellectual, spiritual and moral rectification of the individual.

In modern times there are two aspects to a religion becoming irrelevant, one ideological, another practical. Becoming irrelevant from the practical point of view means that a religion gives such commands to its adherents as are impracticable from the point of view of the age factor. As mentioned above, no such command exists in Islam. In its practical aspects, Islam is a religion of adjustment, giving ample concession to circumstances. There is enough flexibility in Islam in this regard. That is why Islam could never become irrelevant, whatever the age, so far as practical matters are concerned.

When we look at this issue from the ideological point of view, we do find on certain occasions, that the demands of Islam and the demands of the age are diametrically opposed to one another. But as mentioned

above, in matters of ideological differences the way of peaceful persuasion alone must be adopted. At all events, no practical initiative is to be taken when the circumstances are unfavourable. In such a state of affairs, ideological differences will never create any problems in any age or in any situation.

One thing worth remembering in this connection relates to *Ijtihad* (exercise of judgement with reasoning). One role of *Ijtihad* is that whenever any teaching of Islam appears to be going against the demands of the time, the religious scholars are duty-bound to strive by exercising *Ijtihad* to seek a reapplication of the teachings of Islam to the changed situation. *Ijtihad* is in fact another name for seeking reapplication of Islamic teachings to the changing needs of the time.

Muslim scholars of modern times, feeling the need to exercise *Ijtihad*, have made an effort to reapply the principle of Islam in this matter. For instance, in the Indian subcontinent Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad said that since in modern times nationality was linked with the homeland, Islam would also follow the same principle. That is to say, in whichever country Muslims lived, they would be regarded as co-patriots like other citizens. And they would not insist on a separate nationality for themselves.

Great importance has been attached to the process of *Ijtihad* in Islam. According to one *Hadith* of *Sahih al-Bukhari*, if a Muslim exercises *Ijtihad* and he reaches the right decision he will be doubly rewarded and if, even after his sincere effort, he fails to reach the right judgement he will still be rewarded. This shows that the act of *Ijtihad* must continue in all circumstances, even when there is a possibility of arriving at the wrong judgement.

The aim of *Ijtihad* is that in all ages the gap between Islam and the age may continue to be filled. In no circumstance should the impression be formed that Islam has become irrelevant. It was due to the importance of this matter that the Prophet of Islam encouraged Muslims to continue the process of *Ijtihad*, even at the risk of making mistakes. In no circumstance was the door of *Ijtihad* to be closed.

The truth is that the actual goal of Islam is to bring about an intellectual revolution among people, in order to produce high thinking. Such a task is eternal in its nature. Along with eternal laws, goes the principle of flexibility in Islam. Along with *azimat* (absolute commands), Islam gives ample space for concessions and exemptions. Along with the observance of form, Islam gives equal importance to the spirit. □

ISLAMIC VIRTUES

To Emulate

FOR centuries the lives of the Prophet and his Companions have served as models of a truly God-fearing existence for all humankind, and will continue to do so. Hence God's preservation of this page of history with such exactitude that anyone, who is sincere about learning from their example can know, even today, every detail of how they lived and died. The following are a few of the examples worth emulating.

LEARNING FROM EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS

A cart pulled by two oxen, drove past Abu Darda, a Companion of the Prophet. He watched as one of the oxen carried on pulling while the other stopped. "There is a lesson even in this," said Abu Darda. "The one that stopped was whipped, while the other was left alone."

MENTION WHAT IS GOOD: PASS OVER WHAT IS EVIL

Abu Harun tells of how he once went to Abu Hazim, and after greeting asked him how one could offer thanks for one's two eyes. "When you behold good, make mention of it and when you behold evil, pass over it," replied Abu Hazim. Then Abu Harun asked him how one could offer thanks for one's ears. "When you hear something good, pass it on," said Abu Hazim, "and when you hear something evil, make no mention of it."

PREFERRING TO BE UNOSTENTATIOUS

At the end of a long journey on camel-back, Caliph Umar arrived in Palestine along with a group of emigrants and helpers. The long garment which he had been wearing for so many days had torn at the back and it was given to be washed and mended. The garment was brought back mended, along with another one made out of fine cloth. Umar looked at it and asked the person what this was that he had brought. "Your garments," he replied. "I have washed and patched it. The other one is a gift from me." Umar examined it, running his hand over it, then he put on his own garment and gave the other one back to him saying that the old one absorbed sweat better.

BY PERFORMING SMALL TASKS A MAN DOES NOT Demean HIMSELF

The Caliph of Islam, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz, was talking to someone late one night when the lamp started flickering. "I will wake up the servant,"

ventured his companion, "He can put some oil in the lamp." Umar told him not to do so. Then he got up and put the oil in the lamp himself. "I was Umar ibn Abdul Aziz before I put oil in the lamp, and I am still Umar ibn Adul Aziz," said the Caliph.

WHILE WORSHIPPING GOD, DO NOT INCONVENIENCE OTHERS

The Prophet was once in retreat in the mosque when he was disturbed by the sound of loud recitation. Raising the curtain, he said to the worshippers, "Look, you are all intent on beseeching God, but in so doing you must not trouble others. Don't raise your voices to outdo each other while reciting the Quran."

SHOWING NO FAVOURITISM

Abdullah ibn Arqam came before Umar one day and said to him: "Commander of the faithful, there are some ornaments and silver dishes among the articles that have come into the treasure from Jalula. Please look at them and tell us what to do with them." Remind me of this when you see that I am free," replied Umar. A few days later, Abdullah did so when the Commander of the faithful appeared to have nothing to occupy his attention. Umar then went to the treasury and had the ornaments and dishes brought before him. The moment he saw them, he recited the fourteenth verse of the chapter Al-Imran: "The satisfaction of worldly desires through women and children and heaped up treasures of gold and silver, and pedigreed horses, and cattle and lands is attractive to people. All this is the provision of the worldly life; but the most excellent abode is with God."

Then Umar said: "We cannot help but rejoice in something that has been made tempting to us. Lord, may we spend it aright. Protect us from its evil." Just then one of his own sons, Abdul Rahman, came along and asked his father for a ring, Umar did not give him the ring instead he said: "Go to your mother, she will feed you barley soup." □



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

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.



MISUNDERSTANDING JIHAD

BECAUSE of a wrong interpretation by some Muslims, *jihad* has come to be understood as war to ‘reform’ others, or what is called in Urdu as *muslihana jang* (reformist war). These people say that Muslims are God’s *khalifas* or deputies on earth and that it is the responsibility of Muslims as God’s deputies to establish the rule of God in the world. They think they are charged with the God-given task of making people obey God’s rules. They name this war as *jihad*.

This understanding of *jihad* is undoubtedly false. It has nothing to do with the Quran and the *Sunnah*, the Prophet’s practice.

The notion of a ‘reformist war’—from the point of view of its consequences—is nothing but war for promoting *fasad* or strife. In society, everyone has the right to peacefully express their views, but the belief that one can use physical force to ‘reform’ others is simply unacceptable when it comes to relations between communities and countries. In any particular society, and also at the international level, no group of people can arrogate to themselves a right that they are not willing to allow others also to enjoy. If a particular group wants to have the right to engage in ‘reformist war’, then, obviously, it must be ready to grant the same right to other groups as well. The result of this would be that each group would start warring with the other groups, all in the name of self-styled ‘reform’. Needless to say, no ‘reform’ can ever come about this way. The only result will be never-ending strife.

The fact is that there is only one legitimate form of war, and that is war fought in defence. If a nation transgresses its geographical boundaries and openly attacks another nation, then, in such a situation, the nation that has been attacked has the right to reply by fighting in defence. Other than this, there are no legitimate grounds for war at all in Islam. This principle is as firmly grounded and accepted in Islam as in many other non-Islamic systems.

In this regard, there is an issue that needs particular attention. It relates to the past, to the period of the age of monarchs. In this period, much of the world was under various dynasties. At that time, the monarch was considered to be above the law. He thought he could do whatever he wanted. Because of this, every king engaged in deeds that were clearly morally or legally improper.

Morally improper deeds were committed by kings all over the world in those days. But all this is now just a part of ancient history. However, while in many countries this has been forgotten and did not cause

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conflict between communities, this is not the case in India, where it has become the cause of considerable and continuing bitterness between Hindus and Muslims, leading to repeated communal riots. It is a major challenge in the path of promoting communal harmony.

The basic reason for this is Muslim *ulema* and intellectuals have wrongly seen and portrayed Muslim dynasties in India as 'Islamic' dynasties, considering them to be a chapter of the history of Islam as such. In fact, however, these dynasties merely consisted of rulers who happened to belong to some Muslim families. It is completely wrong

to consider their rule as 'Islamic' rule. These two things are totally different. But because this difference was not kept in mind, the events that were associated with particular Muslim kings or Muslim dynasties came to be associated in people's minds with Islam as a religion.

Because this basic distinction was not borne in mind, another terrible blunder that Muslims made was that they perceived the period of the rule of these Muslim rulers as a source of Islamic pride. They viewed it as a symbol of the domination of Islam. On the other hand, Hindus began thinking on the lines of what is called 'righting of historical

wrongs'. Naturally, both these stances led to mutual bitterness. When Muslims began taking pride in the memory of the deeds of Muslim kings, then, consciously or otherwise, these kings became, for them, a sacred part of their religious history. And, on the other hand, Hindus perceived these same deeds as historical misdeeds and began trying to redress them.

Both sides have blundered. The mistake of the Muslims is that they are not ready to re-look at the history of these Muslim rulers because they have given this history a religious hue. And, on the other hand, the mistake of the Hindus is that they are not willing to forget the past. They insist on the righting of historical wrongs, even if this results in destroying the potentials and prospects of the present.

In this matter both parties need to be realistic. Muslims should not give the Muslim rulers of the past the status of 'Islamic rulers'. Instead, they should see them simply as the government of particular families. They should disown the un-Islamic and immoral behaviour of these Muslim rulers. They should openly condemn them for this—be it Mahmud Ghaznavi or Aurangzeb or anyone else.

On the other hand, Hindus should seek to forget the past, in line with the saying, 'The past is past'. They should desist from emotionalism in this regard and adopt a pragmatic and realistic approach. Hindus should remember that historical wrongs have always happened, but yet no one has ever been able to remedy any of them. This theory about righting historical wrongs is undoubtedly unwise. It is tantamount to spoiling one's present in the name of correcting the past. This view is against nature. People who think in this way will, in the name of salvaging their past, only lose their present and future.

Unfortunately, however, this is precisely what has happened in India. Countries that have sought to build their present after forgetting the bitterness of their past have achieved brilliant success. One example of this is Japan. In the aftermath of the Second World War, Japan did not seek to correct the wrongs committed against it by America, but, instead, focused on trying to rebuild itself. The result was that Japan is today an economic superpower. In contrast, in India people tried to rectify historical wrongs, but that only further exacerbated the country's backwardness.

For a country to progress, a necessary condition is to maintain national progress as the main issue, setting aside everything else as of secondary importance.

For a country to progress, a necessary condition is to maintain national progress as the main issue, setting aside everything else as of secondary importance. People in general should be concerned that national progress should continue unhampered. They must refuse to let emotionally-driven issues and controversies come in the way of national progress. Without this sort of popular consciousness, it is impossible to have social peace.

A story is told about a *Qazi* or Muslim judge. One day, he had to hear a very strange case. It involved two women who were fighting over a newly-born child, each claiming it as hers. However, neither of them had any sort of legal proof of being the child's mother. This was a big test for the *Qazi*. Finally, he ruled that the child should be sliced into two, and that each woman should get a part of the child's body.

Attempting to eliminate differences is to defy a universal law of nature.

Needless to say, no individual or group is so strong that it can fight with, and win against, nature.

When the *Qazi* passed this judgement, it made no impact on the woman who falsely claimed to be the child's mother. But the real mother burst out screaming. 'Don't kill the child! Give it to this other woman, if you want!' she pleaded.

This is the true standard of love. Those who truly love their country must shout out, like this woman did, 'We cannot bear to see our country being destroyed! We must forget the past so that we can fully use the opportunities available in the present in order to gift our country a glorious future!'

In national life, peace and unity are possible only on the basis of acceptance. It is a principle of nature that differences will arise between individuals and also between groups. Differences are a necessary part of life. That is why communal harmony cannot come about by eliminating differences. Rather, it is possible only on the basis of tolerance and acceptance.

The fact is that attempting to eliminate differences is to defy a universal law of nature. Needless to say, no individual or group is so strong that it can fight with, and win against, nature. That is why pragmatism demands that as far as the issue of religious and cultural differences is concerned, we must abide by the principle of tolerance, rather than resort to confrontation. Accept differences so that unity can be established, because seeking to establish unity by eliminating differences is simply impossible. □

TO MAKE UP FOR OUR HELPLESSNESS

God's Mercy

GOD'S power is absolute; man's power before His is as nothing. It is not true to say that the difference between God and man is one of having more power or less power; the difference is one of power and powerlessness. God is omnipotent, while man has not one iota of power.

What if one questions the very propriety of God having created man as a powerless creature? What if one claims that it was not fair of God to have put man in a world in which he has no power over himself, or over the world around him? This question can only be answered if a way is found in which man can completely make up for his helplessness. Nothing less than complete compensation will provide a satisfactory answer. Added to this, the compensation for man's helplessness must come from his helplessness itself. It must be the very fact that man has no power that makes up for his powerlessness, for otherwise the answer will not justify the question.

The answer to this question is given clearly in the teachings of the Quran and Prophet of Islam. God has shown us special mercy: He has made supplication sufficient to ensure that we receive. If a person makes a real, earnest supplication to God, then he will find what he seeks. Since man has no power of his own, he has to be given something in order to possess it. God has promised that one who prays for something will receive it. One who presents his helplessness before God in the form of humble supplication will receive compensation for his helplessness. In this way God gives unto man from his own presence.

The Prophet of Islam put it this way: "No prayer is ever rejected." These words of the Prophet Jesus express the same truth:

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find;

knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth;

And to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread,
will he give him a stone?

Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven given good things to them that ask him. (St. Mathew 7:7-11) □

THE VEIL OF SATAN

Avert Deception

THE following is a part of a lengthy *Hadith* of the Prophet of Islam: Satan keeps hovering over the eyes of humankind so that they may not reflect upon the divine signs scattered all over the heavens and the earth. Had it not been so, they would certainly see the divine wonders in the universe.

The universe around us is called nature in scientific terminology. Man comes across numerous events or phenomena in this vast world of nature. He sees and has experiences, but most people are unable to derive any meaning or lesson from them. This verse of the Quran refers to the unheeding: "And there are many signs in the heavens and the earth that they pass by and give no heed to". (12: 105)

It is Satan who puts the thought in man's mind that all those signs of nature are the result of the laws of cause and effect, occurring as a natural consequence, rather than as the result of divine power.

These events scattered in the universe are in fact divine signs—they serve as an introduction to the Creator in the form of His creation. If man were to see with open eyes he would observe the marvels of nature in these signs.

But Satan puts such thoughts in man's mind as prevent him from seeing those events of nature from the right perspective. It is Satan who puts the thought in man's mind that all those signs of nature are the result of the laws of cause and effect, occurring as a natural consequence, rather than as the result of divine power. Satan tries to stop man from

looking at these events from the point of view of deriving lessons from them. He strives to make man look at them purely from the point view of material gain. Satan tries to make man take everything around him for granted and not ponder or reflect upon them. It is these Satanic whisperings (*waswasa*) which deprive man of the right realization of reality. □



He who is most in error is one who cannot say 'I have erred.'

WHAT IS TRUTH

Nature

THE Quran states: " If truth had followed their whims and desires, heavens and earth and all that lives in them would have been brought to ruin. (23: 71). God's scheme of creation is a perfect one. The whole universe, except man, is following this divine scheme. That is why the Quran points out that the universe is faultless (67:3). But man is free to act as he likes. He follows his desires and forsakes the true path. The result is corruption and disorder in the human world. Man's perversion is the price of his freedom.

The Islamic solution to the problems of man is the same as that which has been ordained for the rest of the universe. If man follows the path of truth, like the universe, he can produce the same spirit of peace and harmony which the cosmos already displays. The path of truth as opposed to the path of man's desire can be understood from this verse in the Quran: " The sun cannot overtake the moon, nor can the night outpace the day; each floats in (its own) orbit" (36: 40).

If man follows the path of truth, like the universe, he can produce the same spirit of peace and harmony which the cosmos already displays.

It is God's will that everything should move in its own orbit. All astronomical bodies act accordingly, never clashing with one another on their course. If man were to apply this principle to his life, everyone would operate in his own given sphere, thus rectifying the friction which exists in human society. On the other hand, if he follows his own desires, he comes into conflict with his fellow men which causes trouble both at the individual and societal or national levels. □

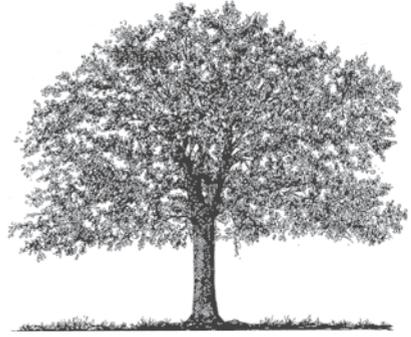


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FROM THE SPIRITUAL TREE

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



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

THE greatest thing that is desired from man is that he should be grateful to his Creator and Sustainer and that he should acknowledge God as the Giver of all blessings. But this thankfulness or acknowledgement is the rarest of rare things in this world. Man lives in this world amidst a multitude of divine blessings, yet he remains ungrateful.

What is the reason for this? The reason is that whatever man receives, he gives himself the credit for it. How did he come to this world? This was owing to his parents. How does he survive in this world? Through his planning and strategy. How did he make progress? By his cleverness. How did all his issues get solved? Through his friends and relatives. How did he receive the place of honour? Through his connections and relations, etc.

In this way, what happens is that everything man receives from God is attributed to someone else, rather than to God.

It is due to this wrong association that feelings of gratefulness and acknowledgment are not produced within him. Just uttering some words like 'Alhamdu lillah' or 'Subhana Allah' does not suffice as thanksgiving to God.

Gratefulness is always a result of discovery. First of all man discovers the reality of God being our greatest benefactor. This discovery awakens his mind. Subsequently, a process begins in his mind which results in the flowing of a spring of gratitude within his heart.

This internal state produced within one finds expression in the form of words of thanksgiving and acknowledgement of God's blessings. One who has not known gratefulness at the level of discovery will fail to do the obeisance of thankfulness to God at the level of human utterance. □



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SEARCH FOR TRUTH

An Intellectual Pursuit

MAN is a born seeker—a veritable truth-seeking being. Every human being regards himself as incomplete until he has found that supreme principle by which he can explain his existence in this world and discover the purpose and meaning of his life.

Everyone is a seeker. True. But few are finders. Why? Because, where seeking is instinctive, finding is the outcome of one's own conscious effort.

In the pre-Islamic period, there were certain individuals in Arabia, called *Hunafa*. They were all truth seekers. Confining themselves to solitary places, they would remember God and say: "O God if we had known how to worship You, we would have worshipped You accordingly."

This was due to their urge to come to grips with reality—an urge such as is found in every human being, the difference between one individual and another being only one of degree: in some, the urge is weak, in others it is strong.

Then, there are some deviations. Some people take certain material objects to be their goal in life and do their utmost to obtain them. But there is an evidence that they do so mistakenly. Before obtaining these material objects, they are highly enthusiastic about them. But as soon as they have them in their possession their enthusiasm turns to frustration for, with experience, they invariably find that what they have struggled for so hard, has failed to give them the desired sense of fulfilment. All these material things in this world are meant to fulfil only our physical needs. They have nothing to do with the purpose of our lives. This purpose can only be spiritual in nature, and not something material.

To make one's life meaningful, one has to discover its purpose. One should be extremely sincere and honest in this respect.

To achieve this purpose is the greatest quest in life. Everyone is motivated, consciously or unconsciously, by this demand of human nature, everyone at one time or another suffers from a sense of frustration, with or without sad experiences. To make one's life meaningful, therefore one has to discover its purpose. One should be extremely sincere and honest in this respect. Sincerity and honesty

are an assurance of engaging oneself unremittingly in this pursuit, and never giving-up, until one has discovered the real purpose of human existence.

When a man succeeds in discovering this ideal, he becomes a person who is fit to be called a complete man, one who has succeeded in making his life purposeful, in the real sense of the word. Such a person has been called in the Quran: *Al-Nafs-ul-Mutmainna* (89: 27). This means a soul at rest, in peace or in a state of complete satisfaction. That is, a man who wholeheartedly follows the divine way of life and is always fully satisfied, whether or not it is in consonance with his own desires. By showing such total willingness to surrender his will to the will of God, he attains that state of humanity which is at one with the creation plan of God. This will to search for the truth is implanted in everyone. But it depends upon every individual himself, whether or not he pursues this natural urge. Only through sincere pursuit will he discover the truth and thus make his life meaningful. For any kind of negligence or apathy in this regard, there is no excuse, whatever the circumstances.

The philosophical explanation of the world requires unbounded knowledge, whereas man has had only limited knowledge bestowed upon him.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the role of philosophy, science and mysticism in this quest for truth.

Philosophy

Philosophy is the only discipline which, by its own definition, embodies the quest for knowledge and understanding of the nature and meaning of the universe as well as of human life. But after a long search of more than 5000 years, to which the greatest minds of human history have been bent, it has failed to provide any definite answer to such questions.

The main concern of philosophy was to make a unified picture of the world, including human life. But the long history of philosophy shows that this still remains an unfulfilled dream. The Encyclopaedia Britannica in its 27-page article on philosophy and its history, admits that there seems to be no possibility of philosophical unification. The article concludes with this remark:

In the contemporary philosophical universe, multiplicity and division still reign.

Why this failure? This failure is not of a chance or intermittent nature, but seems to be a permanent feature of the philosophical approach to reality. The Quran has drawn our attention to this fact, saying:

They question you about the spirit. Say, 'The spirit is at my Lord's command, and you have been granted but little knowledge.' (17: 85)

This means the problem stems from man's own shortcomings. The philosophical explanation of the world requires unbounded knowledge, whereas man has had only limited knowledge bestowed upon him. Due to these intellectual constraints man cannot uncover the secrets of the world on his own. So it is not the lack of research, but the blinkered state of the human mind, that stands as a permanent obstacle in the philosopher's path to reality. It is this human inadequacy which explains the unexplainable.

For example, suppose, in order to unveil reality and the law of life, the enquirer starts from a study of human settlements. After a detailed survey, he comes to the conclusion that since society is composed

The search for truth, by its very nature, is entirely an intellectual exercise. Its findings too are intellectual in nature.

of human beings, he had better focus on the individual, and so he studies human psychology. But there he finds that, despite extensive research in this field it has resulted in nothing but intellectual chaos.

He ultimately finds that no unified system emerges from psychology. In despair of finding any solution to the problem, he turns to biology. His in-depth study of biology leads him to the conclusion that the whole human system is based on certain chemical

actions and reactions, so, for a proper understanding of the human body he begins to study physics and chemistry. This study leads him to the discovery that, in the last analysis, man like other things, is composed of atoms. So, he takes to the study of nuclear science, only to arrive at the conclusion that the atom is composed of nothing but incomprehensible waves of electrons.

At this point man, as well as the universe, are seen as nothing but, in the words of a scientist, a mad dance of electrons. A philosopher ostensibly begins his study from a basis of knowledge, but ultimately comes to a point where there is nothing but the universal darkness of bewilderment. Thus a 5000-year journey of philosophy has brought the sorry conclusion that, due to its limitations, it is simply not in a position to unfold the secrets of the universe.

It is evident from the several thousand year-long history of philosophical inquiry that philosophy has failed to give any satisfactory answer to questions concerning reality. Moreover, there is a growing body of evidence that philosophy is inherently incompetent for the task undertaken by it. The need, therefore, is to find some alternative discipline that may help us reach our desired intellectual goal.

Science

Science has divided the world of knowledge into two parts—knowledge of things and knowledge of truths. According to this division, science has confined its study only to a part of the world and not to the entire world. A scientist has rightly remarked that “science gives us but a partial knowledge of reality.”

This means science being confined in its scope to the physical aspect of the world, has kept itself aloof from higher spiritual matters. No scientist has ever claimed that science attempts to find out the absolute truth. All scientists humbly submit that the “search for truth” is not their target. They are simply trying to understand how the objective world functions and not why it functions. For instance, the chemistry of a flower may be chemically analyzed, but not its odour.

Science has never claimed that its objective is to discover the total truth or absolute reality. The concerns of science are basically descriptive, and not theological.

Science has never claimed that its objective is to discover the total truth or absolute reality. The concerns of science are basically descriptive, and not theological. Although science has failed to give a satisfactory answer to the quest for truth, it is not to be disparaged, for this has never been its motivation.

Many people had pinned their hopes on science providing them with the superior life they had sought for so long. But after more than two hundred years, it has dawned upon recent generations that science has fallen far short of fulfilling man’s hopes and aspirations, even in the material sense. Now it has been generally acknowledged that, although science has many plus points for human betterment, it has many minus points as well.

Science gave us machines, but along with them it also gave us a new kind of social problem: unemployment. Science gave us comfortable motor cars but at the same time it polluted the air, making it difficult for human beings to inhale fresh air; just as with the rise of modern

industry, there came the pollution of life-giving water. Production may have been accelerated, but at the cost of adversely affecting our whole social structure.

If the object of science was to provide man with the answer to his search for truth, it had obviously failed. If the search for truth was not within the province of science, there was no reason for it to figure in such discussions at all. In other words, science cannot be legitimately blamed for not helping man to grasp the ultimate reality, for this was not something expected of it. Indeed the reality lies far beyond the boundaries of science.

Mysticism

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, mysticism is a “quest for a hidden truth or wisdom.” The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought defines it thus: “Mysticism is the direct experience of the divine as real and near, blotting out all sense of time and producing intense joy.” According to the mystics, the final state produced by mystical exercises is inner joy or spiritual bliss, whereas the subject of the present article is the search for truth.

The highlight of human existence is consciousness, or the mind. The successful seeker of truth finds it at the level of the mind, or consciousness.

The search for truth, by its very nature, is entirely an intellectual exercise. Its findings too are intellectual in nature. It is successful when the seeker finds rational answers to the questions he poses about the universe and his own existence. The search for truth is not a vague matter. It begins from the conscious mind and also culminates there.

The case of mysticism is quite different. Mysticism is based essentially on intuition, and is not a conscious intellectual process. As such, the mystical experience is more an act of spiritual exhilaration than an effort to apprehend the truth in intellectual terms. Mysticism, as popularly conceived, makes the basic assumption that the physical, material, and social needs of man act as obstacles to his spiritual progress. Therefore, mysticism teaches him to reduce his physical needs to the barest minimum; to renounce worldly and social relations; and if possible to retire to the mountains or jungles. In this way, he will supposedly be able to purify his soul. Thus, by giving up the world and by certain exercises in self-abnegation, a mystic expects to awaken his spirituality.

The mystics can broadly be divided into two groups: those who believe in God and those who do not. Non-believers in God assert that there is a hidden treasure in the centres of our souls. The task of the mystic is to discover this hidden treasure. But this is only a supposition. None of them has ever been able to define this hidden treasure or to explain it in understandable terms. Tagore has thus expressed this claim made by the mystics:

“Man has a feeling that he is truly represented in something which exceeds himself.”

But this is only a subjective statement unsupported by logical proofs. That is why, in spite of its great popularity, no school of this mystical thought has so far produced any objective criterion by which one may rationally ascertain that the existence of such a hidden treasure within the human soul is a reality, and not an illusion. On the other hand, no well-defined law, or step-by-step practical programme, has been introduced by any individual or group that might help the common man reach his spiritual destination consciously and independently.

Moreover, mysticism makes the claim that the natural quest of man is its own fulfilment. It does not require any external effort to arrive at the perceived goal. In other words, it is like assuming that the feeling of thirst or hunger in man contains its own satisfaction. A thirsty or hungry person is not to trouble himself to search for water or food in the outer world.

Those (of this school of thought) who believe in God interpret this hidden treasure in terms of God. To them the inner contemplation of a mystic is directed towards God.

This concept too is rationally inexplicable, for, if such mystic exercises are a means to discover God, then, there should be genuine proof that God Himself has shown this way to find Him. But there is no evidence that this path has been prescribed by God. On the other hand, there is a clear indication that this course separates the seeker from God's creation and leads him to a life of isolation. This makes it plain that God cannot enjoin such a path to realization as would mean nullifying the very purpose of creation.

The mystics hold that although the mystical experience may be a great discovery for them, it is, however, a mysterious and unexplainable realization which can be felt at the sensory level, but which cannot be fully articulated. According to a mystic: “It is knowledge of the most adequate kind, only it cannot be expressed in words.”

This aspect of the mystical experience proves it to be a totally subjective discipline. And something as subjective as this can in no degree be a rational answer to the human search for truth. Those who have attempted to describe the mystic experience have chosen different ways of doing so. One is the narrative method, that is, describing their point of view in terms only of claims, without any supporting arguments. Another method is to make use of metaphors. That is, attempt to describe something by means of supposed analogies. From the point of view of rational reasoning, both methods are inadequate, being quite lacking in any credibility in rational terms, and are therefore invalid.

Therefore the three branches—philosophy, science and mysticism do not provide answers to a seeker as he aims at a rational explanation of the world and endeavours to discover a definite principle by which he may successfully plan his present life.

The highlight of human existence is consciousness, or the mind. The successful seeker of truth finds it at the level of the mind, or consciousness, and not at the level of ecstasy.

A material analogy is the electric bulb and the powersource. The bulb in its inactivated state is a lightless object. With no inherent light, it lacks the innate ability to give light to others. But when connected to the powersource, it immediately lights up, becomes bright, giving light to others. This exemplifies the criterion for discovering truth. Finding the truth is like consciously finding a light.

For a conscious being like man, an unawakened mind cannot realize the ultimate truth or the higher reality of God. God can be realized only through a developed mind.

The field of knowledge is vast, and can be classified as—knowledge of things and knowledge of truth. The study of man tells that deeper knowledge is required to determine how to lead life in this world. This has been dealt with in detail by Alexis Carrel in his book, *Man the Unknown*. It has to be conceded that man cannot discover this necessary knowledge through his own efforts and requires external guidance. Therefore the stage is left to the Prophets to present the knowledge of truth. □



SUICIDE

Not an Option

GENERAL ATIQRUR RAHMAN, former Chairman of the Pakistan Federal Service Commission, came to Delhi on an official visit in February 1984. An emigrant to Pakistan, he had worked before partition during the Second World War with Field Marshal Manekshaw in Burma. At a meeting with journalists, he told of how, during his stay in Burma, Manekshaw had once been badly wounded, and the pain having become unbearable, he decided to put an end to his life by shooting himself. He asked Rahman to give him a pistol for this purpose, but Rahman refused. The General added, laughing, "Had I known at the time what Field Marshal Manekshaw was going to do to us during the 1971 war, I would certainly have given him my pistol!"

Manekshaw's state of despair was such, during the Second World War, that he wanted to commit suicide; quite unaware of the fact that 25 years later, he was to emerge the victor in the 1971 war.

If Islam holds suicide to be unlawful, it is because committing suicide means having despaired totally of any succour from God. What is equally bad is that it also signifies a refusal of the world hereafter. But if a man is convinced that he will not face extinction upon the death of the body, and that he will experience a rebirth in the world hereafter, he will never commit suicide. For one who is fully aware of life after the present life, the anguish of this life will pale into insignificance.

Beside this, there is another aspect to holding suicide unlawful—it conveys a message to man not to be forgetful of the future because of temporary hardships. The present world is one in which every person has their moments of pain and grief. But these should be recognized as transient phase, and borne with stoicism and courage. Just think of Manekshaw who wished to annihilate himself, little realizing that his name was to be emblazoned in the pages of history as a latter-day conqueror. □

The present world is one in which every one has their moments of pain and grief. But these should be recognized as a transient phase, and borne with stoicism and courage.



THE MESSAGE AND MEANING OF HAJJ

God-oriented Life

THE significance and message of the pilgrimage is for man to turn towards God, making God the central focus of his life. Although Hajj lasts for just a few days, the lessons it provides have a much broader significance. Hajj is a comprehensive guide for the entirety of one's life.

When we take leave of our homes and families and set off for Hajj, we feel as if we are journeying towards God. It feels like we have left our world and are entering the world of God. We feel we are heading towards the House of God, to the abode and working place of God's Prophet and his Companions—to the historically significant places of people who had devoted their entire lives for the sake of God, and who gave their lives in God's path. With this, the pilgrim also realizes the fact that he is setting off for that place which God specially chose to reveal his final guidance to humankind.

In this manner, Hajj leads the pilgrim to becoming a God-oriented person. He recalls and remembers God. His mind is filled with thoughts of God. If earlier he used to think principally about himself, now he thinks mainly or wholly of God.

Although, Hajj is in the form of a physical journey, due to its internal spirit it becomes a meaningful one that leads the pilgrim to a lofty stage.

A person's psyche is moulded in accordance with his thoughts. If we think about and act only for ourselves, we become self-centred. But when we set off towards God, our mind turns towards Him. We begin to think of God. We now remember that it was God who created us; that it is God who gave us so many different opportunities; that it was He who made us capable of doing many things in this world; that it was because of His blessings that we are able to journey towards His house;

that, finally, the day will dawn when we will die, after which we will have to directly appear in His court. All this makes the pilgrim's journey into a truly spiritual one. Although, Hajj is in the form of a physical journey, due to its internal spirit it becomes a meaningful one that leads the pilgrim to a lofty stage.

As the Haji, or pilgrim, reaches a particular place close to the place of pilgrimage he calls out the following words:

“God is the Greatest! God is the Greatest! There is none worthy of worship other than Him! And God is the Greatest! God is the Greatest! And all praise is for Him!”

By constantly repeating these words, a consciousness develops in a Haji (Hajj pilgrim) that all greatness is for God alone. In comparison to God, everything else pales into complete insignificance. The greatness of everything else is only so that it can be drowned or surrendered in this greatest of all glory—the glory of God. This is the real secret of social consciousness. You cannot have unity and harmonious collective living where every one thinks that they are greater than the others. On the other hand, when everyone surrenders their sense of individual greatness, you will find unity and harmony. People can live harmoniously together only when everyone surrenders their sense of greatness before a single being.

When people from different parts of the world arrive close to the place of pilgrimage, they remove their distinctive dress and don the same sort of simple, unstitched white clothes—a uniform known as *ihram*. This symbolizes that they have now entered a new world. By removing their national costume or personal dress, it is as if they are shedding the lifestyles that they had been conditioned into. They are now stirred by a powerful God-consciousness, being dyed in the hue of God.

Putting divine clothes on their bodies, the pilgrims begin to utter divine words: *Labbaik! Allahuma Labbaik!* It means: ‘Here I am at Your service! Here I am at Your service!’ They cry out, as if God had called them and they are rushing towards Him. The cries of *Labbaik! Labbaik!* ‘Here I am at Your service! Here I am at Your service!’ resound continuously from the pilgrims all around. When the pilgrim cries, *Labbaik!* ‘Here I am!’ he doesn’t mean to say that he has come to settle in Makkah.

It isn’t a declaration of his having left his homeland and arriving in Makkah. Rather, it is a declaration of having left his previous conduct or behaviour. It is an announcement to say that, ‘I am here with a complete willingness to obey You (God), and do whatever You (God) command. To submit my life and soul to Your command.’ Although the pilgrim declares, *Labbaik*, ‘Here I am at Your service!’ at the place of

When everyone surrenders their sense of individual greatness, you will find unity and harmony. People can live harmoniously together only when everyone surrenders their sense of greatness before a single being.

Hajj; he must stand by this declaration in practice in his personal life on his return from Hajj too.

On reaching Makkah, the first thing that the pilgrim does is to circumambulate the Kabah. This is an important ritual of Hajj known as *tawaf*. The Kabah is a historical structure originally built by the Prophet Abraham in the centre of a large courtyard also called the House of God. In the courtyard, the pilgrims go around the Kabah seven times, symbolizing their willingness to have God as the centre of their lives. They affirm that they will consider God as the focus around which their lives will revolve. It is as if scattered bits of iron are being pulled towards a divine magnet.

Hajj teaches us to lead God-centric lives, to make God the focus of every aspect of our lives and to spend our lives according to His will.

The *tawaf* is symbolic of making all of one's efforts constrained to a single focus. This is akin to our solar system, where all the planets revolve around a single sun, the axis around which they whirl. In the same way, Hajj teaches us to lead God-centric lives, to make God the focus of every aspect of our lives and to spend our lives according to His will. This is the same with all the other rituals of Hajj. Thus, in different ways, all rituals of Hajj have the same symbolic significance of a God-conscious life.

Believers all over the world turn towards the Kabah every day, offering their five daily prayers. Ordinarily, this is just a notion in the minds of people, but when they gather together during Hajj, it becomes an astounding reality. When believers from all over the world pray together facing the Kabah, they experience an amazing sense of unity when they realize that they are facing the same Kabah of the believers of the whole world.

During the *tawaf*, the orderly circumambulation of the Kabah provides the pilgrims another invaluable lesson—of working together, of doing things together and in harmony. Here, differences between rulers and subjects are wiped off completely, as are ethnic differences. It is as if every single person has just one status: as a servant of the one God. At this time, they have no other status but this.

After the *tawaf*, the pilgrim runs seven times between the hillocks of Safa and Marwah. This too, is a symbolic declaration—an expression of the pilgrim's determination to devote all of himself to God's path. This running between the two hillocks is not simply a mere physical act.

In the form of repetition of a historical act, it stands for the pilgrim's willingness to spend his whole life running in God's path. It is symbolic of making all activities throughout one's life to be contained within certain boundaries. If our activities are not bound or regulated in this manner, it would lead to chaos. Such regulation is necessary for a well-ordered life.

One of the most important acts of worship during Hajj is the heading to and staying in the plain of Arafat. This presents a truly astonishing sight. Vast numbers of people, from across the world, assemble here, wearing the same simple clothes and uttering the same words, 'Here I am at Thy service O Lord, here I am.' It is a worldly rehearsal of the Day of Judgement, when all people will be brought before God. It is a reminder of the great truth that one day we will all have to stand before God, accountable for all our actions.

If one realizes this significance of the assembly at Arafat, one's life can be totally transformed. It is as if all the differences among human beings have suddenly vanished, and that, setting aside all their conflicts, they have surrendered themselves to the one God. It is as if they have all become one, just as their God is one. Despite their differences of language, colour, status and gender, they have become identical and one. Different nationalities, it appears, have all turned into one single nation or community. Hajj is a glorious and unparalleled expression of human unity and collectiveness. One cannot find anything similar elsewhere in the world.

Hajj is a glorious and unparalleled expression of human unity and collectiveness.

Another part of the rituals of Hajj is the collection of pebbles for stoning of the *Jamarat*. It symbolizes preparation for warding off the evil whispers of the devil. By stoning the *Jamarat*, the pilgrim refreshes his determination to repel evil and cause the devil to flee from him. He announces his enmity against, and opposition to, the devil. If one converts this symbolic act into actual practice, one can truly expel all evil and negativity from oneself.

Following this, the pilgrim sacrifices an animal in God's path. In the Quran it is included in the divine symbols. Sacrificing an animal stands for sacrificing one's own self. By sacrificing an animal, the pilgrim symbolizes his willingness to sacrifice everything in God's path, including even his own life if need be. He expresses, thereby, his commitment to offer his everything for God's sake.

Although the rituals of Hajj are completed in Makkah, many pilgrims go to Madinah after finishing their Hajj. The ancient name for Madinah is Yathrib. Towards the end of his life, the Prophet of Islam made it his centre, and that is why it came to be known as Madinat-un-Nabi or 'The City of the Prophet'. Madinah is a short form of this term.

Hajj leads the pilgrim to becoming a God-oriented person. He recalls and remembers God. His mind is filled with thoughts of God.

In Madinah is a mosque built by the Prophet, where his grave is also located. Here also one finds the footprints of his prophetic life. When Hajis (pilgrims) arrive in Madinah, they are reminded once again of the collective unity of humankind despite its diversity. The mosque of the Prophet reminds them that their one true guide is the same Prophet. They return from here with the feeling that despite their geographical or national differences, they have to follow the same path, the one shown

by the Prophet. This is another powerful symbol of their unity. They return from Madinah inspired by the understanding that no matter what their differences—of nation, ethnicity and so on—they must all walk on the path of their same Prophet, that they must take as their guide the same blessed figure, and that their God is the One God. □



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THE RECOGNITION OF TRUTH

A Test

WHEN the Prophet first brought God's message to the people, there were many who opposed him. When he conveyed the message they said, "It is witchcraft." They also asked, "Why was this Qur'an not revealed to some great man of the two towns?" (43: 31) God answered them thus: Is it they who apportion your Lord's blessings? It is We Who apportion to them their livelihoods in this world, exalting some in rank above others, so that the one may take the other into his service. Better is your Lord's mercy than all their hoarded treasures. (43: 31-32)

The "two towns," Makkah and Taif, were central cities in ancient Arabia, where certain citizens like Walid ibn Mughirah and Utbah ibn Rabia in Makkah and Urwah ibn Masood and Ibn Abd Yalayl in Taif, enjoyed the status of acknowledged leaders (*akabirs*). They were held in high esteem and were looked up to by the people for guidance. That is why when "Muhammad ibn Abdullah" claimed to be the Prophet, people failed to understand how that could be possible, when he was not one of the acknowledged leaders.

To be able to perceive the truth for what it is, is one of the most important tests set for man by his Maker. That is why this ever-recurring test will confront man till Judgement Day itself.

The truth is generally accepted when projected as such by some established and influential personality. But acknowledgement of the truth—and here is the greatest test for man—is valid only when the truth recommends itself by virtue of its own merit; when it is perceptible as such without the say-so of men of fame and status.

To be able to perceive the truth for what it is, is one of the most important tests set for man by his Maker. That is why this ever-recurring test will confront man till Judgement Day itself: Those who consistently measure up to it will succeed: Those who do not will fail.

To accept the truth on the basis of its visible grandeur is to judge by mere externals. Such an acknowledgement is valueless in the eyes of God. The true believer is one who accepts God's reality before any visible signs appear to support it.

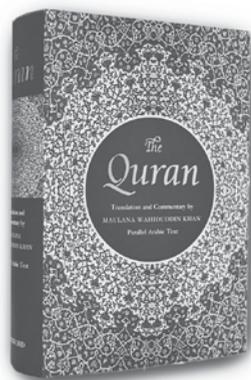
This world is a world of trial, in which God appears only to those who have the ability to penetrate the divine disguise. □

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 AD. It is a book that brings glad tidings to humankind, along with divine admonition, and stresses the importance of man's discovery of the Truth on a spiritual and intellectual level.

Translated from Arabic and commentary by
Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



Believers, obey God and the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. Know that God stands between man and his heart, and you shall all be gathered in His presence. And beware of an affliction that will not smite exclusively those among you who have done wrong. Know that God is severe in exacting retribution.
(8: 24-25)

Here the 'call of life' means the call for the struggle to convey the Truth to others. Initially this struggle starts by preaching by word of mouth or by means of the pen. But the belligerent attitude of those to whom the call is given takes this struggle to various other stages, even to the extent of migration or war. Man formulates his religious life in accordance with his ideas, at the individual level. He makes his life so consistent with his circumstances that it appears to be an island of safety for him. He has the feeling that if he exerts himself to reform others, this well-established abode will be destroyed; his well organized life will be disturbed and the regulation of his time and the system devised by him to govern his property—keeping his personal requirements in view—will be upset.

Such fears prevent him from making efforts to call upon others to the Truth and to sacrifice his life and property for that cause. But this is utter stupidity. The fact is that the abode of peace which he considers his 'life' is his graveyard, and hidden in the sacrifice in which he sees his death, lies the secret of his life. Giving the call to the people and their reformation are extremely important tasks, provided that they are aimed at the Hereafter and are not for worldly purposes. It makes a dead religion a living religion. It links man with God at the highest level. It introduces man to such religious experiences as he could never

have if he remained in his individual shell. If, in spite of hearing such an important call on behalf of God, people are still unmindful of it, they incur the risk of creating a psychological barrier between themselves and the Truth; they risk losing their natural capacity to hear the voice of Truth, to rush towards it and discover their Lord.

Man's life is social in nature. Nobody can go on living on his own on an isolated island. If a man is content with his personal righteousness, he always incurs the risk that, as a result of perversion in society, he himself will also be affected, for he is also a part of the same society. His struggle to reform the people would serve as a practical demonstration that he was not involved directly or indirectly with evil people. Every evil starts in a small way and then gradually becomes greatly enlarged. If it happens that when an evil is in the initial stages, it is opposed by a number of people at that time, it will be easily crushed. But once the evil has spread, it becomes so deep-rooted that it becomes impossible to eliminate it.

Remember when you were few in number and were accounted weak in the land, ever fearing the onslaught of your enemies, but He provided you with shelter, and supported you with His help and provided you with good things, so that you might be grateful. Do not betray God and His Messenger, and do not knowingly violate your trusts. Know that your wealth and children are a trial and that there is an immense reward with God. (8: 26-28)

In Makkah, Muslims were in a state of helplessness. They were always in fear of being uprooted at any time. They were like a weakling who is oppressed in every way and denied even his legitimate rights. At last the way to Madinah opened for them. They were given the opportunity to go to Madinah, form a centre of their own there and live in freedom and with respect in that atmosphere.

This providing of easy circumstances after difficulties is meant to infuse feelings of gratefulness in man. When a man's living conditions reach the point where he feels himself helpless, at that time suddenly God's help appears and everything changes for the better. It happens in this way so that man should firmly believe that whatever happened was at the behest of God, and on the basis of this realization, he should be overflowing with gratitude for the grace of God.

Man embraces faith in God and His Prophet. In this way, he vows that he will tread the path of God and His Prophet. But, while adopting the way of Faith, the compulsions of his property and children come in the way. Then, he shuns the requirements of Faith and gives all his

attention to property and children. This is an open betrayal of his pledge of Faith. The gravity of this betrayal becomes painfully obvious when it is realized that the things for which man betrays God are in themselves gifts from God.

What are a man's property and his children? Are they not gifts from God? They are a trust given by God to his subject. The best use of this trust is that when its Donor wants it, it should be willingly surrendered to Him. But when God exhorts the people to rise and strive with all their might in the cause of His religion, they make an excuse of that very trust of God which they should have sacrificed for God's religion and thus fulfilled their pledge of Faith to Him. In this way, after being on the verge of success, they add their names to the list of failures.

An action becomes a crime in the eyes of God only when it is perpetrated in the full knowledge that it is wrong. □



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ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

What characteristic trait is most essential in an individual so that he can contribute to national development?

The example of Toyota, Japanese automobile company, provides an insight into this question.

Toyota has been functioning for the last thirty years without a single day ever having been wasted, and without its production ever once having slackened. This is only one of the many examples which explain the fast development of industry in Japan. General Motors and the Ford Motor Company of the USA are the biggest motor manufacturing companies in the world. The annual production of these motor companies is, on an average, 11 cars per employee, while the Toyota Motor Company annually produces 33 cars per worker.

Considering the non-existence or at least paucity of all the major raw materials of industry in Japan—coal, iron, petroleum, etc.—Japan still manages to surpass all other countries in industrial progress. One might well ask why one commentator attributes Japan's success to: "A national spirit of compromise and co-operation, and a willingness to endure short-term setbacks for the long-term good of the nation, company or family."

It is temperament then which plays the most crucial role in the making of a nation. It is important in nation-building in the way that bricks are important in any kind of construction work. A house made of unfired bricks is unsafe, because any calamity, even a minor one, can bring it tumbling down. A building, on the other hand, which is made of kiln-fired bricks can be trusted to withstand the onslaught of tempests and floods.

A character so tempered that it can be depended upon through thick and thin—like the kiln-fired brick—is what in the long run builds a nation, for it is only such a temperament which can remain attuned to the more and more complex procedures of industrialization and remain steadfastly geared to national progress.

Recently there has been a lot of activism seen throughout our country to root out corruption. What is the right approach to resolving the problem of corruption?

Everyone is worried and wants to have a corruption-free world. This in itself is a good desire, there is no doubt about it. But such a desire

can be achieved only through adopting the right method towards its fulfilment.

People, both political and non-political, are fascinated by the concept of raising voices against evil. Every day there are some examples of the use of this method. Some people are speaking on stage, some are protesting on the streets, some are organizing *paidal-yatras*, while others are trying to produce the required result through the ballot box. The purpose of all is common, that is, to raise their voice against social and political evils.

These methods have been in use for more than half a century, however, the required result is nil. The situation is akin to sowing the seed but having no yield in return.

Why have these efforts failed to produce positive results? The reason is very clear. Social change cannot be brought about through demonstrating on the streets, it is brought about by changing people at the intellectual level. Social change is not an issue of street activism, it is an issue of intellectual activism. The only way to social change is one, that is, education, both formal and informal. This method seems to be a very long-term method, but according to the law of nature, any substantial result is achieved only by long-term planning. Short-term planning cannot produce any valuable result. Social construction or nation building is like growing oak trees. If we perform this task in the right way, a time will come when nation building will have become a reality. However, if we do not adopt the right method to carry out this task, then even after thousands of years of effort we will not be able to achieve our target.

To eradicate corruption, we have to give individuals a goal greater than money. The pursuit of wealth will only lead to discontentment, while the pursuit of wisdom will always lead to contentment. Only the content can abandon corrupt practices. To achieve this goal, we have to address individual minds, not attract crowds. A spiritual revolution cannot be brought about by a mob. And only a spiritual revolution can root out corruption. Education is the first step towards the construction of a nation. There can be no other beginning to the journey.

What is the most pressing issue confronting India as a society today?

In present-day India, the sphere of education and employment is vitiated by favouritism. But if the government in power were to take decisions which were merit-based instead of favour-based, the class of people who reaped benefits from the favour culture might become

discontented, thus making the government's second term doubtful. But, the result would certainly be the coming of a new culture in India, which would usher in an age of quality education and services. Thus, a process of sound development would be initiated.

India's basic problem is the lack of quality in education, services and administration. The only reason for this is favouritism, which inevitably thrives at the cost of quality. This policy may benefit some individuals, but because of it the nation as a whole suffers. Quality in work comes into evidence when everything is based on merit. Those who make the second term their concern will only take popular decisions. But, one whose concern is the nation will take realistic decisions.

The issue facing Indian democracy is not who won the elections. Rather, the losers should willingly accept defeat, while the winners should make the availing of present opportunities their sole concern. In such a situation, the present party may lose the second term, but because of its efforts, the country will have been set in motion along the path of progress.

In developed countries, the principle of 'compete or perish' works in every field. 'Compete or perish' is not a negative concept. In fact, it means 'stand up through competition and save the nation from perishing.'

Thus, whenever there is development, there will, at the same time, be the voicing of complaints or grievances, which have to be dealt with. Otherwise, the process of development will come to a standstill. The concern of democratic administrators should be the nation rather than the immediate wishes of the voter community. The real issue for them must be whether or not the nation is moving towards holistic development in the long-term.

Often we see that a minor dispute between two individuals leads to a full-fledged conflict between groups representing the two individuals. How to avoid such instances?

People nowadays tend to resort to violence at the slightest provocation from others. When the losses of meaningless quarrels are pointed out to them, they seek to justify themselves by saying that they were not the aggressors and that their opponents had forced them to take to fighting. "We didn't fight!" they retort. "It was those people who did it! They conspired against us to make us fight."

Such people do not know that "not to fight" is not simply that if no one fights you, you do not fight with anyone. "Not to fight" means that if someone comes to fight you, still you should not fight with him. Non-violence does not mean remaining peaceful so long as no one is acting violently towards you. It means to refrain from violence even in face of violence. If someone seeks to provoke you, you should not allow yourself to get provoked. If someone conspires against you, you should render the conspiracy ineffective through wisdom and silent, positive action.

Unity is crucial for the joint working of the citizens of a country, so that they can contribute to the successful advancement of their nation. How should we practice this unity?

When the Indian journalist Khushwant Singh visited Japan, he enquired about the prospects of the legal profession there. He was told that it was not a flourishing business. The reason being the fact that the Japanese preferred settling disputes on their own to suing in the courts. Willingness to admit faults by each party is the surest way to bring quarrels to an end. It is only when either party seeks to place the whole blame on the other side that the quarrel takes a turn for the worse. Whereas the very gesture of shouldering the blame softens up the other side, with the result that the dispute dies a natural death.

This realistic attitude has greatly benefited the Japanese in many respects. For instance, this makes them place their trust in one another. Thus they save the time and money they would otherwise expend on lengthy legal documents. Most of the commercial institutions trust in verbal understandings. Formerly it was practiced only among Japanese, but now foreign investors have also started to take advantage of this practice. Avoidance of unnecessary legal obligations invariably speeds up the work.

Essentially, such an outlook gives rise to unity. It is undoubtedly the greatest force that contributes to the success of a nation. In the words of an expert of Japanese affairs, the secret of Japan's success lies in: "Never quarrelling amongst themselves, always doing everything together." □



*If you fail to act you cannot
compensate for it by speaking more.*

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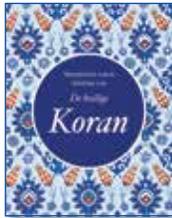
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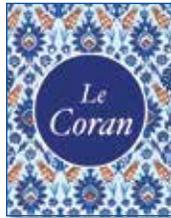
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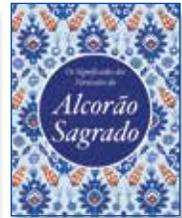
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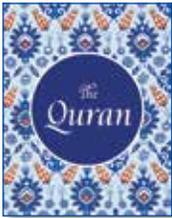
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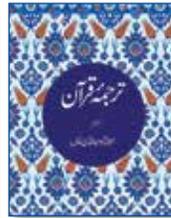
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