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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



**Develop your personality by admitting your mistakes,
discover your weaknesses and strive to rectify them.**

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 66 JUNE 2018

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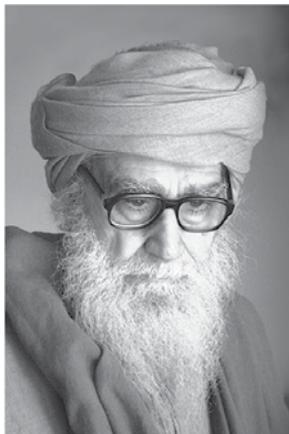
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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 Muslims'. 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.

DIFFERENT IS BEAUTIFUL

EF SCHUMACHER authored a book '*Small Is Beautiful: A Study Of Economics As If People Mattered*'. It is often used to champion small, appropriate technologies that are believed to empower people more, in contrast with phrases such as "bigger is better". Paul Taylor wrote the book, '*Black is Beautiful: A Philosophy of Black Aesthetics*'. In the same vein, I would like to say, '*Different is Beautiful*'.

I am specifically referring to differences of opinion which should be used as a stepping stone rather than considering it as an obstacle. There is an example from Islamic history to illustrate this: The Kabah was built in the shape of a rectangle by Prophet Abraham, four thousand years ago. It transpired that for some reason, the Kabah had to be re-constructed, but in the process of construction the Makkan people made it square-shaped. Consequently, about a third of the area of the former rectangular building was missing from the newly built Kabah.

The Prophet of Islam was later advised to restore the Kabah to its original shape, as built by Prophet Abraham. But the Prophet did not do so. The long, rectangular shape of the Kabah was earlier required,

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

as it had been built as a house of prayer. Later, since it was needed only for circumambulation, a square-shaped Kabah could be used just as well. Therefore, the Prophet letting the Kabah continue in its square shape was an example of re-planning on the basis of what was already there. His doing so meant that the Kabah could be immediately used just as it was, otherwise in the struggle to rebuild it and recover what was lost, precious time would have been wasted.

There are several examples that convey that planning on the basis of what remains with one is the best form of planning, as it reduces losses by not causing any further delay. The same principle could have been applied to the re-building of Palestine. If, after the Balfour Agreement in 1948, the Arabs had planned on the basis of the part of the country that remained with them, Palestine would have been a story of success.

Palestine is situated at a strategic location in the Middle East, and it was enriched not only by its natural oil reserves but also by its historical monuments. If the leaders of Palestine or the rest of the Arab world had known the secret of planning with what was left to them, they would have restored and developed these monuments of historic value in order to attract visitors, thereby making it a great tourist hub. In this way, they would have converted Palestine into 'Palestine Plus'. But Arab leaders did not realize this secret of success. Consequently, Palestine has been a story of failure, despite the innumerable sacrifices that have been made.

'Different is beautiful' is undoubtedly a comprehensive formula, which has several aspects to it. For example, if there are differences of opinion among people, it paves the way for dialogue. This dialogue becomes the stepping-stone to new thoughts and ideas, which in turn foster creative and intellectual development.

Human beings are born with unlimited capacity, which usually remains in a dormant state. To convert this potential into actuality, a trigger is needed. For example, Newton saw an apple falling from a tree. This caused him to wonder why the apple did not go up. This type of thinking is actually what every occasion of difference has the potential capacity to yield. It is only once the mind has been triggered that it becomes creative and looks beyond limitations to discover hitherto unknown facts and ideas, just as Newton did. □

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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.

THE ARABS AND THE EMERGENCE OF ISLAM

WITH an area of 120,000 square miles, the land of Arabia is the largest peninsula in the world. It has the Red Sea to the West, the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden to the south-east and the rivers Euphrates and Tigris and the Persian Gulf to the north-east. It thus occupies a unique position. It is situated in Asia, yet only the narrow Red Sea divides it from Africa and by just passing through the Suez canal, one reaches the Mediterranean Sea and Europe. It is thus at the centre of three continents, yet it is apart from all of them.

Arabia being a very hot and dry country, one third of it is desert. Yemen, the original home of the Semites, is the only exception, in that it is fertile and enjoys a rainy season. Besides this, the rest of the peninsula consists of barren valleys and deserts. The camel was the only means of transportation during the pre-Islamic period. Makkah and Madinah were two towns initially inhabited by the descendants of the nomads, who still retained many of the desert habits of their ancestors.

Situated in a valley, Makkah is one of the oldest cities in the world. It is a desert, with no vegetation or date palms. However there are some fertile spots in the desert, which are called Oases. Large as well as small clans settled around these Oases. Makkah since ancient times was an important centre for the caravans coming from the south with valuable merchandise. They brought gold, precious stones and spices from Africa to Yemen. From here it was taken to the markets of Syria,

Egypt and many other places on the backs of camels. Agriculture not being possible, Makkah thrived on commerce. It became an important trading centre because of the Sanctuary—the Kabah, to visit which people came from places far and near. So Makkah became a religious as well as a financial centre. As a religious centre, Makkah wielded greater influence on this account. Makkah, a focal point of pilgrimage dating back to the origin of Arab history, owed its status to the Kabah, which had been built by Prophets Abraham and Ismael.

The progeny of Ismael were known as naturalized Arabs and they greatly multiplied. They were divided into many tribes and clans. The Quraysh were the largest tribe and were considered the most honourable. Due to trade the Quraysh became one of the richest and most powerful tribes. Prophet Muhammad belonged to the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraysh. Besides the Arabs there were also Christians and Jews who lived in Arabia. A large number of their population lived in Madinah.

Makkah, a focal point of pilgrimage dating back to the origin of Arab history, owed its status to the Kabah, which had been built by Prophets Abraham and Ismael.

In Arabia there are two different geographical types of soil markedly different from one another—the oasis and the desert. The inhabitants of Arabia naturally were divided into two main groups: nomadic or Bedouins and settled people or the city dwellers. The Bedouins lived in tents and possessed goats, camels and horses. They were continually on the move. They attached the greatest importance to total freedom for the individual as well as the tribe, but this was not the case

with the city dwellers. They attached importance not only to freedom but also to peace, security and prosperity.

As far as the religion of the Arabs was concerned the Arabs followed the religion of Abraham for some generations, but their later generations tended to deviate from the path of monotheism.

Emergence of Islam

Islam emerged in a region known as Hijaz, inhabited by the descendants of Ismael and another tribe, the Banu Kinanah. These people had access only to limited resources, limited habitable area, cattle, pasture and oases. Everything was in short supply. They could only afford an extremely simple life. Due to these constraints they often waged war, sometimes to take possession of the limited reservoirs of water and pastures. As they lived very far from the artificial world of civilization the Bedouins had many good qualities. The atmosphere of nature served

as a vast school of nature for them. They never led the artificial life of the cities and their life was devoid of all formalities. This extremely simple, austere life made them realists.

All this was responsible for producing in them the qualities which the Arabs called manliness, which meant to them, acknowledging the truth, speaking nothing but the truth, fulfilling promises, honouring obligations, supporting the oppressed, boldness, noble character, patience, generosity and hospitality. When this high level of humanity was guided by the message of Islam, they were able to perform great feats. This fact is mentioned in one of the sayings of the Prophet as:

“Those who were good people in the days of ignorance will also be good people during Islam.”

These Arabs were the people who were selected by God to lend full support to His final Prophet, so that he might fulfil the divine mission.

Among the ancient Arabs there were also a sizeable number who were known as *Hanif*. These people were truth seekers. They lived an aloof social life. They used to say:

“O God, I do not know how You should be worshipped. Had I known, I would have certainly worshipped you in that manner.”

These people, true in nature took no time in responding to the call of Prophet Muhammad who belonged to the tribe of Quraysh, when he began preaching in 610 AD, after being chosen as a prophet by God. They became his devoted Companions. Though in the initial stage of the Prophet’s call, many of them—due to some misunderstanding—had turned against the Prophet, later—after understanding the message—they became his followers.

Thus the sending of the final prophet amongst the Arabs was not without reason. It was a well-planned decision of God which He in His own knowledge decreed. These Arabs were the people who were selected by God to lend full support to His final Prophet, so that he might fulfil the divine mission. □

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BLAME THYSELF

I Am Wrong

IN his book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie highlights the dangers of criticism. "... *It wounds man's precious pride, hurts his sense of injustice and arouses his resentment.*" It is obviously no way to endear oneself to anyone. To underscore this he tells the story of a hardened criminal by the name of Crowley who, having parked his car in a no-parking area in Long Island, was approached by a policeman and asked for his license. Crowley so resented the implication that he was in the wrong that he took out his gun and shot the policeman dead. The murderer was arrested in May 1931, a case was filed against him and the judge sentenced him to death on the electric chair. Such was his egocentricity that when he was being taken to be executed he said, "This is what I get for killing people? No, this is what I get for defending myself."

To everyone, Crowley was clearly a murderer, but out of self-love, he sought to find words which would exonerate him of the crime. But no one can gloss over murder with mere words. Rectitude is not a matter of self-righteousness, but a matter of fact.

To utter the three damning words, "I am wrong" is so difficult that in the long history of mankind there have been very few cases of people who have actually brought themselves to utter them.

Nevertheless, people become disaffected or even enraged on being criticized and, in his book, Carnegie has covered the whole range of reasons for this being so. The main reason is that criticism, particularly when it is true, brings one down from the high pedestal on which one has placed oneself. Man is a self-lover. He never wants to admit his mistakes. To utter the three damning words, "I am wrong" is so difficult that in the long history of humankind there have been very few cases of people who have actually brought themselves to utter them. □



DOES THE WORLD OF THE HEREAFTER EXIST?

Purpose and Meaning of Life

WE can subject the inquiry of the existence of the Hereafter to the same scientific principles as we use to study the physical phenomenon around us. We present here a few ideas in support of the argument that the world of the Hereafter is a rational and scientific fact.

The Meaningful Universe

Sir James Jeans once observed that the Creator of the universe must have possessed a mathematical mind. Here, we must add that the very meaningfulness of the universe is a proof that its Creator must have had a deep sense of purpose. Such a purposeful Creator could not have created a world, which was imperfect—and therefore meaningless—if this objective was to be fulfilled.

Despite all its meaningfulness, our world in its present state is incomplete. It requires the existence of another world for its completion. It is such a world that all the prophets have called the world of the Hereafter. This world of the Hereafter is not just a matter of dogma. It is an entirely scientific fact.

Despite all its meaningfulness, our world in its present state is incomplete. It requires the existence of another world for its completion.

First of all, we must define what is scientific proof? Scientific proof does not mean that there can be any degree of absolute certainty about whatever is to be proved. This kind of undeniable certainty is not possible. When something is said to have been proved scientifically, this statement only means that its probability has been established. And, from the scientific viewpoint, we cannot refuse to apply to the case of the world Hereafter, a method that we hold valid in most scientific matters. As we know, the steps to a scientific inquiry include—hypothesis, observation and verification.

If we apply this three-point formula to the world Hereafter, we can certainly arrive at an understanding of its probability. And as we know, in the field of science, probability paves the way for certainty.

Can Man Fulfil all his Desires?

A careful study of the human society shows that all men and women have two contradictory themes running throughout their lives. On the one hand, they are consumed by a limitless desire to establish a dream world for themselves—a world that is in keeping with their ideals and where they may lead their lives—with all the sought-after pleasures and comforts. But, on the other hand, they are faced with this contradiction that, despite surrounding themselves with all the material things conceivable, they fail to build their desired world. Boredom, loss, illness, accident, the infirmities of old age and finally death—within a period of around a 100 years or less—that is the story of every individual born into this world.

The following example is an apt illustration of the same.

Billy Graham, a well-known American missionary, writes that he once received an urgent message from an American billionaire who wanted to meet him without a moment's delay. On receiving this message, Billy Graham cancelled all his other appointments and immediately set out to meet this man.

Everything in this world exists in pairs; everything becomes complete only in a pair—the negative and positive particles in an atom, the male and female in humans, animals and even in plants.

When he arrived at the billionaire's palatial home, he was immediately taken to a private room, where the two men sat on chairs facing one another. Then, with great seriousness, the billionaire said to Billy Graham, "You see, I am an old man and life has lost all meaning for me. I am going to take a fateful leap into the unknown...Young man can you give me a ray of hope?"

The American billionaire is not the only person to be faced with this kind of desperation. Every individual, man or woman, born into this world, is faced with this question at one

time or the other.

We can come to grips with this paradox by examining the observable phenomenon of the principle of pairs, which is universally operative. Everything in this world exists in pairs; everything becomes complete only in a pair—the negative and positive particles in an atom, the male and female in humans, animals and even in plants. Therefore, it follows that along with this world there must exist another parallel world, and in its existence lies the completion of our present world.

The Right Framework

Now, let us come to an understanding of the basic framework of this parallel world. Within this framework, the concepts of “Paradise” and “Hell” will also become clear. Paradise is a resting place for sincere and truth-loving people, while Hell is a place for the insolent and the false.

Thus the picture that evolves is that of the present world being made by its Creator to serve as a testing ground for man due to which he has been granted free-will, whereas the next world has been created as a place where we shall reap the rewards of (or punishments for) our actions in this world.

Let us not forget that although our mind is eternal, our bodies are transient. The study of human physiology shows that our body is composed of several living cells, which keep transforming themselves. In this way the body is renewed at regular intervals. It is regenerated just like the water in a running stream. Yet the body eventually dies but the spiritual personality, or the soul, remains unchanged and lives on. This is because the soul can exist even independent of the body.

Paradise is a resting place for sincere and truth-loving people, while Hell is a place for the insolent and the false.

While everything in this world is so designed as to permit man to develop his personality, we must remember that everything in the present world is finally just a test for man. For, only those who are capable of positivity will finally gain admission into Paradise.

A Satisfactory Explanation

If we go by the theory of cause and effect, is it possible that this entire world could just have been created in vain—with no purpose whatsoever?

Look at the sun, the moon or the tiniest insect—is it conceivable that they could all have been created without any specific purpose?

In fact, everything appears to have been created for a specific purpose. Even human desires appear to have been created for a purpose. However, this purpose cannot be fulfilled in this present limited world. Since these desires are unlimited, they can only be fulfilled in an unlimited world, i.e. in Paradise.

This brings us to the question—what is Paradise? Paradise is the ultimate answer to the human quest. It is a vast, zero-defect, evil-free universe, complete in itself.

Certainty prevails all over the universe, but the human world is marred by uncertainty. Fear is unheard of in the universe, but man continually suffers from fear and apprehension. The rest of the universe is in a state of equilibrium as it receives everything that it needs, while human beings are in a state of imbalance as they are the only creatures in the world to suffer from the painful thought that they have not received what they wanted. Moreover, the rest of the universe is evil-free, while human beings continually suffer from the problem of evil due to the misuse of freedom by others.

Even human desires appear to have been created for a purpose. However, this purpose cannot be fulfilled in this present limited world.

Paradise is the answer to all these problems. The concept of Paradise shows that man too will find everything that the rest of the universe has found. So while the rest of the universe is receiving what it wants today in this world itself, man will receive what he wants tomorrow in Paradise. □



*One has to sink before
one can **rise**;
one has to resign
oneself to **loss** before
one can **gain**;
go **backward**
before one can
advance;
accept **defeat** before
one can claim victory.*

PEACE, SPIRITUALITY AND HEALTH

A Three Point Formula

HEALTH, Spirituality and Peace are linked to one another. Health means a sound physical body; Spirituality purifies one's soul and develops one's personality, and Peace is an essential ingredient in building a healthy society.

All religions give emphasis to these three issues. The Prophet of Islam once said that a strong believer is better than a weak believer, because a strong believer can shoulder all responsibilities in a far better manner. Spirituality has been called *rabbaniyat* in Islam, which means to turn one's materialistic thinking into spiritual thinking. This creates high human values.

Peace is essential for every society. No progress and development takes place without peace. This is the reason why Islam enjoins peace, even at the price of unilateral adjustment. Therefore, a three point formula of being healthy, being peaceful and being spiritual is best for all of us.

All the religions including Islam are subject to change, not in terms of revision but in terms of reapplication. Religion is an eternal truth. But the social framework in which religion is required to be followed is an ever-changing phenomenon. It is change in society and not in the religion itself that needs reapplication to the given situation.

Every religion, including Islam represents a set of values. These basic values are eternal by their nature. But at the time of change, it requires a new kind of adoption and assimilation. It is this process through which human civilization continues its march in history.

This process of change or reapplication applies to all human disciplines like politics, media and the market (economics). For example, in ancient times, politics was based on kingship, so religion found ways of adjustment with this political power. But in modern times political structure is based on popular democracy, so we can see that every religion has sought adjustment with a democratic political system. So is the case of other aspects of human life. In every situation religion is bound to play its much awaited role in establishing peace and harmony throughout the world.

As far as Indian society is concerned, it is deeply rooted in religion. Almost all the major religions have their roots in India. Indian society is a multi-religious society. Religious values are intact among Indian people perhaps more than in any other country. Any planning in India must take account of this social reality.

India is rapidly heading towards modern material development but at the same time India's roots are strong and there has been no degeneration in its spiritual prowess. Religious traditions are deeply connected to peace, tolerance and spirituality. This is unique to India and perhaps there is no other country in the world which is so greatly oriented towards peace, tolerance and spirituality. India is truly a representative of the positive spirit of religion.

If it is unique to this part of the world, it is mainly because Indians possess the rare quality of adjustment. They readily adopt modernity without abandoning the healthy religious traditions of the past. India was fortunate to become an abode of different cultural and religious traditions. This international interaction was a great plus point for India. It enhanced the developmental activities in India and also through this process the country was able to develop a kind of multi-religious civilization.

Indian society is a multi-religious society. Religious values are intact among Indian people perhaps more than in any other country.

The future picture of religion seems to be a bright one. The process of give and take between politics and religion is quite visible and we can say with a considerable degree of certainty that religion will continue to play a very constructive role in the development of human civilization.

Let us understand this in a correct historical perspective. During the previous centuries, religious people—for whatever the reason—engaged themselves all too frequently in violent action. This presented an obstacle to religion playing its destined constructive role in shaping national and international life, but after the emergence of the United Nations in the 20th century, the scenario has changed altogether. The United Nations is helping to create a new world where peace becomes a compulsion rather than a choice. In such a situation, religion is bound to play its much awaited part in establishing peace and harmony throughout the world.

India has been fortunate in its having become the abode of different cultural and religious traditions and it is thanks to this that it has been able to develop a multi-religious civilization. This in turn has underpinned and promoted ongoing international interactions which has been a great plus point for India, as it has served to facilitate and enhance the developmental activities in India today. □

FOCUSED THINKING

Prevent Distraction

THE Quran is a religious book, all the teachings of which are based on religion and spirituality. But there are no watertight compartments in life. Every kind of religious teaching has some secular or worldly aspect to it. This applies also to the Quran. For example, fasting is a religious teaching of the Quran but, at the same time, fasting has a secular aspect in that it is good for one's physical health.

This is likewise true of *tawhid*—the most important teaching of the Quran—meaning the oneness of God.

There is no god but the one God. The following Quranic verse most aptly expresses this:

Say, 'He is God, the One, God, the Self-sufficient One. He does not give birth, nor was He born, and there is nothing like Him.'

(112: 1-4)

Obviously, this is a religious tenet, but it also has its secular aspect, that is, focused thinking. When a believer adopts the belief that God is only one, he develops the habit of concentration. Concentration is the ability to direct all your effort and attention to a single point.

Belief in *tawhid* develops a well-integrated, focused personality. Such a personality hinges upon a single focused mind. In the first instance, focused thinking takes on the hue of a religious belief but, according to the law of nature, it underlies and conditions the temperament of the believer to the point where it spreads and affects all the other aspects of his personality.

Thus *tawhid* leads to focused thinking, and focused thinking prevents the individual from becoming the victim of a fragmented mind. This kind of thinking makes one an integrated personality.

Focused thinking saves one from mental confusion. It helps one to concentrate all efforts on a single point, thus saving one from all kinds of distractions and from developing what is called a 'grasshopper' mind. It further develops concentration, enabling one to differentiate between relevant and the irrelevant, between the real and the relative. It leads to concerted effort, ensuring that one will not waste time and energy. Being focused in one's thinking means that journey will follow

a single track without any kind of deviation. One who engages in this kind of thinking is bound to achieve great success.

You should know the importance of concentration in achieving any goal you choose for yourself. You can understand this from the example of one of the famous thinkers Charles Darwin (1809-1882), who played a major part in the intellectual formation of modern man. Darwin achieved this position of eminence in the modern world by dint of exceptional hard work.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica (1984) says of him:

All his mental energy was focused on his subject and that was why poetry, pictures and music ceased in his mature life to afford him the pleasure that they had given him in his earlier days.

Such intellectual concentration is vital to peak achievement in any field, be it right or wrong. Man has to be so engrossed in his work that everything else pales into insignificance beside it. Unless everything else loses its interest for him, he cannot climb to any great heights of success. If we examine the lives of the truly great, we find that they all worked in the same dedicated way.

In any task of some complexity, there are always aspects of it which present problems that appear at first sight to be insoluble. Sometimes innumerable facts have to be marshalled which can be interpreted only with the keenest of insight. Often a mysterious, elusive factor emerges just at a point when one thinks that all questions have been answered. Such difficulties can be overcome and such secrets unveiled only when one's total intellectual capacity is directed towards the unravelling of the mystery. Without the utmost devotion and one hundred per cent concentration, success will remain forever beyond one's grasp.

It is said that the father of modern science, Isaac Newton, had the special capacity to think in this focused way. Many other great thinkers and super achievers had this ability. Indeed, there is no example in history of anyone achieving great success without having this gift. Focused thinking is the greatest quality in people.

When a believer develops focused thinking in terms of his religious belief, it is not possible to confine it to religious matters. Naturally, it widens its sphere to cover all other aspects of the functioning of his mind. So, believers in the one God naturally become believers in a single target. In terms of religion, this is to believe in the oneness of God and, in terms of non-religious matters, it means concentrated thinking. Here, religion and secularism go hand in hand on the road of life. □

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.



TERRORISM: A GRAVE THREAT

TERRORISM is one of the gravest threats the world is facing today. The tragedy and irony of it is that most acts of armed violence by groups or individuals are being carried out in the name of religion, especially Islam.

Any terrorist or any individual can fulfil a given mission properly only when he is ideologically convinced of its validity. Ideology provides man with the necessary inspiration. Without an ideology, he fails to summon the requisite energy and enthusiasm so vital to the success of any struggle. This is as true of terrorism as it is of any other field of human endeavour.

Some countries are engaged in crushing terrorism in the name of Islam through military action, but that alone will not suffice to eliminate this phenomenon. Apart from often being armed to their teeth, today's terrorists are consumed by the ideology of their cause. So, engaging them is not simply an issue of gun versus gun. It has to be an issue of ideology versus ideology.

Violence always begins in the mind; it needs to be uprooted therefore, from the mind itself. We have to find an ideology of peace with which to confront the ideology of violence; without that there will be no end to the violence. Terrorists are people of a different breed; their ultimate goal is not necessarily victory. Death too is a desired goal. According to their self-devised ideology they believe that if they die in a militant

struggle, they will instantly enter Paradise. Thus for them both victory and defeat will have equal value—in either case they believe that they are the winners.

On the strength of the above mentioned misleading ideology, terrorists can sustain their militancy for an indefinite period of time, even for many generations. But although they belong to a different breed, they are not a people apart. They are an integral part of the contemporary society they live in. And the greatest source of their strength is the ideological factory they run, aimed at brainwashing the youth. This brainwashing goes on unceasingly, and there is always a long queue of those who want to be recruited and end up as martyrs.

Terrorism will persist in one form or another until the ideology of violence is countered with another ideology based on peace. But let us first understand the ideology of violence that is resulting in terrorism.

Ideology provides man with the necessary inspiration. Without an ideology, he fails to summon the requisite energy and enthusiasm so vital to the success of any struggle.

This ideology is that Islam is a political system and that it is the duty of all Muslims to establish the political rule of Islam in the world. This kind of thinking was not prevalent during the time of Prophet Muhammad or his Companions. It is a later innovation. This was developed over the last few centuries by a handful of people and has become widespread in the Muslim world today. This has led to the present day violence.

A group of Muslims especially among the youth have become obsessed with this ideology and are trying to establish the political rule of Islam, thinking it to be their ticket to Paradise. Having failed to achieve this objective of establishing Islamic rule by peaceful methods, they have started resorting to suicide bombing. The reasoning behind this seems to be, 'If we cannot eliminate non-Islamic rule, let us at least destabilize it and pave the way for Islamic rule.'

After studying Islam by referring to its original sources—the Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (the *Hadith*)—one can say with certainty that the political interpretation of Islam is an innovation and the real Islam, as followed by Prophet Muhammad and his early followers, is based upon peace, compassion and tolerance.

A new strategy must now be adopted, a strategy that requires developing a full-fledged ideology of peace to counter the ideology of violence. The ideology of violence is prevalent all over the world and

is so deep-rooted in the minds of not only the extremists but also of many common Muslims that it is important to expose this ideology for what it is and show in detail how it contradicts Quranic teachings. Everyone will thus see the stark difference between the two.

Time and again throughout the ages, people have risen in rebellion and made their mark on human history, but seldom did they attain the level that the Islamists of today have taken it to. There are two main reasons for this state of events—modern weaponry and modern media. These are the twin factors that have propelled terrorism into the limelight.

Another aspect of this phenomenon which must be questioned is the terrorists' ideology. The extremists call their terrorist culture '*Islamic Jihad*'—clearly a misnomer—and portray their actions as having been carried out under the banner of Islam. In this manner, the religion of Islam gets falsely linked with terrorist activities, and its name gets besmirched.

Contrary to common belief, Islam, by definition is a religion of peace. The very word Islam (from the Arabic *silm*) means peace. According to the teachings of the Prophet, peace is Islam. In other words, peace is a prerequisite of Islam. The same is stated in the *Hadith*:

Terrorism will persist in one form or another until the ideology of violence is countered with another ideology based on peace.

A Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands people are safe.

Further, one of the attributes of God mentioned in the Quran (59: 23) is *As-Salam*, which means 'peace and security'. Thus God Himself is a manifestation of peace. Indeed 'God is peace'. The Quran (5: 16) likens divine guidance to the paths of peace. Paradise, which is the ideal human abode, is called the 'Home of Peace' (10: 25). It is also said that the people of Paradise will wish one another peace—this indicates that the social culture of the people of Paradise will be based on peace.

The movement of the terrorists is a movement against humanity. To put an end to this movement, what is required is to bring about a de-conditioning of its adherents. This can be done only by meeting them on an intellectual level and impressing upon them the true and positive picture of Islam based on the ideology of peace rather than on their deceitful ideology of violence. □



INDIVIDUAL, SOCIETY AND STATE

From the Original Sources

IN the following article a brief account of some of the basic aspects pertaining to an individual, society and state are presented in the light of Quran and *Hadith*. Understanding these concepts is of high priority as the world is witnessing muslim culture today which in many aspects is contradicting the real tenets of Islam.

Individual

The Quran says:

Are they seeking a religion other than God's when every soul in heaven and on earth have, willingly or by compulsion, bowed to His will? (3: 83)

This means submission to God is the religion for both man and the universe. All the things on the earth or in space are following God's commands to the letter. The revolution of the stars, the flowing of water, the growing of trees, in short, all things are following the same course which was determined for them by God. Nothing is allowed to deviate from the divine path. The Quran says:

To establish an ideal Islamic State is not the main target of Islam, as is wrongly projected by some groups of Muslims.

The sun is not allowed to overtake the moon, nor does the night outpace the day. Each swims along in its own orbit. (36: 40)

The same is required of human beings. The Prophet Muhammad said:

A believer with his faith is like a horse with its tether. The movement of the horse is restricted to the length of its tether. So is the case with the believer. His words and deeds are all restricted by the limitations set by his faith.

The true believer should lead a highly disciplined life, always adhering to the set of commandments ordained by God Almighty. He should be entirely pure in speech, and should subordinate his intention and thinking to the will of God. He should always be conscious that he is a servant of his Lord. The Quran depicts the true believer thus:

The true servants of the Gracious One are those who walk upon the earth with humility and when they are addressed by the ignorant ones, their response is 'Peace' and those who spend the night prostrating themselves, and standing before their Lord, who say, 'Our Lord, ward

off from us the punishment of Hell, for its punishment is a dreadful torment to suffer. Indeed it is an evil abode and an evil dwelling place.'

They are those who are neither extravagant nor niggardly, but keep a balance between the two. Those who never invoke any other deity besides God, nor take a life which God has made sacred, except with the right to do so, nor commit adultery. Anyone who does that shall face punishment. he shall have his suffering doubled on the Day of Resurrection and he will abide forever in disgrace, except for those who repent and believe and do good deeds. God will change the evil deeds of such people into good ones: He is most forgiving and most merciful. He who repents and does good deeds has truly turned to God.

And those who do not bear false witness and when they pass by frivolity, they pass by with dignity; who do not turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the signs of their Lord when they are reminded of them; who say 'Lord grant us joy in our spouses and children and make us a model for the righteous. These are the ones who will be rewarded with lofty mansions in Paradise, for their steadfastness. They will be received therein with greetings of welcome and salutations of peace. There they shall abide forever; a blessed dwelling and a blessed resting place. (25: 63-77)

In the Islamic scheme, it is the individual—who is a real part of the body of Islam while society and the state are only its relative part.

Society

The foundation of society in Islam is based on mutual well-wishing. In chapter *Al-Asr* (The Time) the Quran says:

By the time, verily Man is in loss, except for those who believe and do good works and exhort one another to truth and to patience. (103: 1-3)

How should a Muslim live in a society? The answer is given in one of the *Hadith*: "If any one of you sees an evil in society, he must rectify it by his own hand. And if he has no capacity to do so, he should do it by his tongue. And if he is unable even to discourage it, then, let him condemn the same in his own heart." (*Bukhari*)

A society based on these principles will naturally be a place in which good will flourish as a result of mutual reminding (which should be done with a friendly attitude), and the roots of evil—if not totally eradicated—will dry up due to public discouragement. As the truth is openly propagated and the virtue of patience is highly recommended

in society, there will definitely prevail a peaceful atmosphere which is a prerequisite for the healthy growth and development of both the individual personality and the social system at large.

It is only in an atmosphere of such peaceful social order that the rights of individuals and communal harmony are ensured, and the higher values of brotherhood, cooperation and altruism are sincerely observed; and, finally, the projects of common welfare, progress and prosperity are successfully achieved.

To sum up, when the ideals of Islam are consciously put into practice by its adherents, there will emerge a society that will be appreciably more secure, free of violence and naturally cooperative, progressive, prosperous, good-enhancing and evil-resisting.

Submission to God is the only true religion for both man and the universe.

State

What is a state? It is an organized political community under one government. Islam does not prescribe any particular form or structure of the state. Nevertheless, Islamic teachings seem to be so comprehensive that they embrace all essential issues of life including the state and its related national or international problems as well.

What is an Islamic state? A state governed by Muslims is not necessarily an Islamic state. Apart from its monotheistic doctrinal basis, an Islamic state would, in practice, be identified with the *summum bonum* principle of 'no-compulsion.' No compulsion should be exercised, either before or after the gaining of power. For power gained through compulsion or power used for compulsion in any sphere whatsoever, particularly in religious matters, is strictly prohibited and condemned in Islam. That is why the coercive forms of states, though governed by Muslim dictators, have never been considered ideal Islamic states by the scholars of Islam.

Islam, moreover, does not allow its followers to rebel against any established state, even though it may not seem to be in accordance with the Islamic ideal. Compulsion on the part of the state should never be resisted by means of counter-compulsion, i.e. it has to be countered through negotiation, backed up by conviction. This ensures such stability of law and order as will subsequently help promote Islamic values, and this may gradually prepare a firm ground for a real Islamic state to stand on.

To establish an ideal Islamic state is not the main target of Islam, as is wrongly projected by some groups of Muslims. An Islamic state is something that may ultimately emerge from a society consisting of sincere, practicing Muslims, and its government may take any workable form,—this being neither predictable nor pre-determinable. Such a state, according to the Quran is a worldly reward of God granted to His righteous servants, when He wills, and not a direct target towards which the believers must struggle.

To conclude, Islam begins when one discovers God as the ultimate truth. This results in a spiritual transformation which leads to new thinking and new sentiments—indeed to the emergence of a whole new personality. A new man is born: he is quite different from what he was before. He now becomes a combination of spirituality, compassion and tranquility. This is like an intellectual and spiritual revolution. This inner transformation finds expression in his external behaviour, in worship, in character, in social relations, etc. To produce a person like this is the main target of Islam. All other aspects of Islam hinge on the fact that man lives in a society, and the greater the number of such individuals in a society, the greater the changes brought about at the social level. This process leads to what may be called the social system of Islam.

This revolution among individuals and society goes on developing until, conditions being favourable, it culminates in what is termed the Islamic state. This process is mentioned in the Quran:

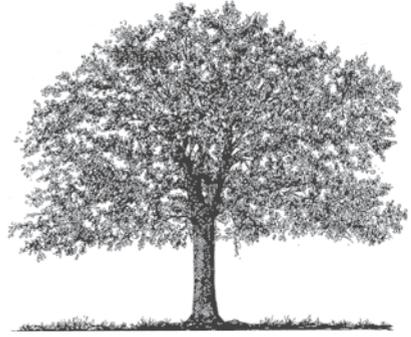
God has promised to those of you who believe and do good works that He shall make them masters in the land as He made their ancestors before them, and that He shall certainly strengthen the religion which He has approved for them, and that He shall certainly change their fears to a feeling of security and peace. Provided they worship Me. (24: 55)

In a garden it is the individual tree which has the real existence. The garden is only a collective manifestation of a number of trees. This is true also of man. In the Islamic scheme, it is the individual—who is a real part of the body of Islam while society and the state are only its relative parts.

Those individuals who have undergone spiritual transformation are called "*rabbani*" in the Quran. Where there are "*rabbani*" individuals in considerable numbers, the "orchard," that is, Islamic society, and the state, will come into existence on their own. □

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



LOVE OF GOD

LOVE of God is not simply a philosophical issue: it is rooted in the very nature of a human being. Love means strong affection. Love is a natural phenomenon, an elevated kind of positive response towards someone you feel is loveable. Love cannot be created in a vacuum, it requires a strong base of affection.

Love of God is this same kind of strong affection. The basis of this love is quite natural when one discovers that one was created by God and that it was God who has given humankind all such bounties as the planet earth, the life-support system, oxygen, water and food. All these things were not created by man. They are precious gifts bestowed by someone else. When one discovers this fact, one naturally becomes a lover of God. Thus, love of God is the outcome of one's discovery.

Love of God is not simply a philosophical issue: it is rooted in the very nature of a human being.

Every sincere person reaches a stage in life when he faces some basic questions such as, how did I come into existence? how is it that I find myself in a world that is extremely

favourable to me? One realizes that this compatibility between man and the rest of the universe is so unique that science has observed that the universe has been custom-made for man. Love is in fact an acknowledgment of this. When we endeavour to acknowledge our super-benefactor, we call it love of God.

Although love is an inner feeling, it comes naturally to human beings to give it an external expression. It is said that man is a social animal, so it is but natural that one's inner love should also find some expression in terms of social relationships. It is this social expression of one's inner feeling that is called peace. In terms of God, love is a psychological acknowledgment of the Creator, and in terms of society, love is manifested in peaceful living among other members of society.

It is not relevant to ask, if we cannot see God, how can we express our love towards Him? This contention may have been valid in the era before nuclear science, but after the emergence of nuclear science it is totally invalid. Nuclear science has successfully established that nothing is observable in this world. For example, everyone loves his mother, but in terms of modern science, no one is able to see his mother. One's mother, as well as other things, is nothing but a combination of numerous unobservable electrons. In fact, 'mother' is an unobservable inner being whom we see with reference to her external body. Similarly, God is an unobservable being whom we see through His creation. In such a world, it is irrational to say that one cannot love God because one cannot observe Him. The fact is that if you receive some good things from anyone, you cannot do other than acknowledge his generosity. In this sense, love of God is a natural phenomenon.

When a person has love in his heart for his Creator, at the same time he cannot resist showing his love to his neighbours.

It is also a law of nature that if you add a pinch of dye to a glass of water, all of the water becomes coloured. This principle is also applicable in the case of love. When a person has love in his heart for his Creator, at the same time he cannot resist showing his love to his neighbours. And in this electronic age, the whole world is one's neighbour.

One can say that love has two dimensions: theoretical and practical. In terms of the theoretical dimension, love means love of God and in terms of the practical or social, love means love for all human beings. □

TRUTH AT ALL COSTS

Success in Both Worlds

AN American statesman, scientist and writer, Benjamin Franklin (1706-90), was known in his childhood to be a tactless fellow, yet in later years, he rose to the coveted post of ambassadorship, being appointed ambassador of America to France. His secret of success lay in his own words:

"I will speak ill of no man, and speak all the good I know of everybody."

Man indeed loves nothing more than being praised and hates nothing more than being criticized.

A man of principle, however, upholds the truth, no matter what price has to be paid. In doing so, he can become an object of scorn or be treated as an outcast from society. On the other hand an unscrupulous person draws the crowds. The reason is quite simple. The former abides by the truth, at all costs. He does not mould himself to the wishes of the people, while, to the latter, it is expediency alone which counts. His aim is to earn the goodwill of the people, so he moulds himself into what they want him to be.

***A man of principle,
however, upholds
the truth, no matter
what price has to
be paid.***

To pass on to others something one does not believe in; to present falsehood as truth for the sake of consolidating one's hold on people amounts to hypocrisy. One so inclined is very likely to achieve success in this world, but will be cast aside in the next world, where truth and untruth will become as clearly separated from each other as day is from night.

There is a great difference between a preacher, the ambassador of God, and an ambassador who is appointed by worldly governments. The former himself sets out to please God while the latter is appointed to please the people. The latter sets his eyes on expediency, on worldly gain, while the former sets his eyes on truth, however dear it might cost him.

A mature person is one who does not think only in absolutes, who is able to be objective even when deeply stirred emotionally, who has learned that there is both good and bad in all people and in all things. Eleanor Roosevelt. □



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.

What those who sit with leaders should be like

Abdullah Ibn Abbas tells of how his father once said to him: "My boy, I see how the Commander of the Faithful, Umar ibn al-Khattab, invites you to his meetings and takes you into his confidence. He also turns to you as well as to the other Companions for advice. I am going to give you three pieces of advice which are worth remembering: firstly, fear God, and never let it be said of you by Umar that you told a lie; secondly, keep his secrets well, and thirdly, never speak ill of anyone in his presence." Amir says that each one of those pieces of advice was better than a thousand. "Better than ten thousand," rejoined Abbas. *(Al-Tabarani)*

Lip service is not a proof of real attachment

Jubair ibn Nufair relates how, as his father was sitting with Miqdad ibn Aswad one day, a passerby, on seeing a Companion of the Prophet said: "How fortunate are those two eyes that have seen the Prophet! By God, if only we could have seen what you saw and shared in your experiences!" Nufair said that he was impressed by the man's words; he seemed to have spoken well. But Miqdad looked towards the man and said: "No one whom God has saved from being present at those hours should desire to have been there. Who knows how they would have acted in those circumstances? By God, many of whom God cast into Hell came to see the Prophet, such as did not accept what he said, or believe in his mission."

On hearing the Hereafter mentioned, he waived his claim

Umm Salamah tells of how two of the Ansar brought a dispute before the Prophet about a long-standing issue of inheritance for which neither party could produce a witness. "You bring me your disputes," the Prophet said to them, "and, when no proper evidence is brought

forward, I judge them according to my own way of thinking. I might, on the basis of partial evidence, make a settlement in favour of one of the parties, but in so doing, it may be that I take away from the other what is his rightful due. In that case, the one in whose favour I pass judgement should not accept what has been apportioned to him, for that would be like his accepting a firebrand which, on the Day of Resurrection, would stick on his neck." At these words, both the Ansar broke down and wept. "Prophet of God!" they both cried out, "he can have my rightful share!" "The Prophet then told them that in view of their changed attitude they should go and, seeking to do what was just and right, should divide the inheritance into two parts. Then they should draw lots as to who should have which part. In this way, each would have the other's approval of the share he received. (*Kanz al-Ummal*)

Knowledge is more than just information

Malik ibn Anas said: "Knowledge is enlightenment. It comes only to a humble, fearing, pious heart."

Swallowing one's anger increases one's faith

Abdullah ibn Abbas records the Prophet as saying: "The draught of one who swallows his anger is dearer to God than any other. God fills with faith one who swallows his anger for God's sake." (*Musnad Ahmad*)

Receiving praise, not with conceit, but with humility

According to Naafi, someone launching into extravagant eulogies to Abdullah ibn Umar, addressed him as "most noble of men, son of the most noble". "Neither am I the most noble of men, nor am I the son of the most noble," replied Ibn Umar. "I am just one of God's servants; in Him do I have hope, and Him do I fear. By God, you are bent on destroying a man with such praise." (*Hilyat al-Auliya*) □



ISLAM
IS A SCHEME
OF SPIRITUAL
DEVELOPMENT.

RELIGION AND THE LIFE HEREAFTER

Points to Ponder

The crux of religion is indubitably the belief in the life Hereafter.

SO says Allama Shibli Nomani (1857-1914) under the heading 'Life after Death' in his famous book, *Al Ghazzali*. He goes on to say that it is because of this belief that religion has had an impact on human activities. Yet, despite it being the single most important belief in religion, it has been open to question. He quotes a Bedouin poet who, addressing his wife, expresses this most succinctly:

*Death, rebirth,
My dear: it is all nonsense.*

Shibli feels that the first and most difficult hurdle to be surmounted is acceptance of the fact that the spirit survives as an entity in its own right, quite independently of the body. The materialists for their part think of the soul as being just one more ingredient in the body, in the way that a chemical element is inextricably a part of a compound, or they regard it as being a particular property of the faculties of thought and sense perception on a parallel with the melody which results when notes of a musical instrument are struck in a particular sequence. Drawing extensively on two of Imam Ghazzali's books, he observes that the description of the soul and the arguments which Ghazzali has mentioned are all derived from Greek philosophers. Aristotle in his *Theology* has said the same and Avicenna has reiterated this in his own language. But the strange thing is that Ghazzali has left out the point which is of prime importance in the discussion of spirit or soul. Soul has no body. It is an essence. It being purely non-material, makes it of the first importance to prove its existence. As Shibli himself observes:

The existence of the soul is a matter of intuition. After pondering over it, we come to know that the faculty of reason is not merely a property of matter. Matter is a lifeless thing.

The existence of the soul is a matter of intuition. After pondering over it, we come to know that the faculty of reason is not merely a property of matter. Matter is a lifeless thing. Without reason, you cannot find sublime ideas, arts and sciences and scientific disciplines in matter. These are delicate substances, quite other than matter, which account for creativity in the fields of the arts

and the sciences. Matter cannot have a creative faculty. This is an attribute of the soul. After proving the existence of soul as something separate, the second stage is to prove its survival, that is, its capacity to survive after the death of the body.

As a corollary to this he adds: 'Though Avicenna has presented lengthy arguments about the existence of the soul, these are nothing but word games—or tautology—just like other Greek philosophic thoughts. If an atheist bent on denying its existence says, "What you have said is just a kind of repetition of your claim. It has nothing to do with the argument but is a reiteration of your initial statement and may be matter itself is responsible for its kaleidoscopic manifestations after combining in a particular way; the working of a machine and the music of a musical instrument are similar things, but without having any kind of spirit." There is no logic by which he can be reduced to silence. That is why Imam Ghazzali did not produce any logical argument about the soul.'

Shibli Nomani ends the discussion at this point. And of a work dating back to 1901, we could hardly expect more. Modern research,

Personality is changelessness in change, that is, the human personality is self-existent (as compared to the body), keeping its existence in changeless form amidst continuous changes.

however, has opened up new vistas of events and realities, so that we can now assert to a certain extent that the permanent existence of the soul, independent of the body, or the survival of the soul after the death of the body is no more a thing which involves blind faith; rather it has become a reality which can be empirically proved.

Science has discovered that the body is composed of innumerable tiny cells. These cells disintegrate each moment, but our diet makes up for those destroyed cells and they are replaced with new ones. The body is thus like a building which is composed of billions

of bricks but which is in the process of replacing its bricks at every moment. Now, if the soul is a phenomenon of the body, then with the disintegration or changing of the cells of the body, the soul should simultaneously undergo the same transformation, just as a whole machine is affected when one part of it is broken, or as the breaking of a single string affects the tone of a musical instrument. But such is not the case with the soul. This shows that the soul is independent of the body and has its own existence. This is why a scientist has said, "Personality is changelessness in change," that is, the human personality is self-

existent (as compared to the body), keeping its existence in changeless form amidst continuous changes.

Further proof of the truth of this concept is provided by the discovery in the field of psychology of the 'unconscious' or the 'subconscious'—a major part of the human brain. It has been established that the thoughts stored in the unconscious remain in exactly the same condition until death. Freud writes in his thirty-first lecture:

The laws of logic—above all, the law of contradiction, do not hold for processes in the Id (inner nature). Contradictory impulses exist side by side without neutralizing each other or drawing apart; at most they combine in compromise. There is nothing in the Id, which can be compared to negation, and we are astonished to find in it an exception to the philosophers' assertion that space and time are necessary forms of our mental acts. In the Id there is nothing corresponding to the idea of time, no recognition of the passage of time, and (a thing which is very remarkable and awaits adequate attention in philosophic thought) no alteration of mental processes by the passage of time. Cognitive impulses which have never got beyond the Id, and even impressions which have been pushed down into the Id by repression, are virtually immortal and are preserved for whole decades as though they had only recently occurred.

By means of various experiments and demonstrations, it was shown that even after bodily death, the human personality survives in some mysterious form.

The processes of the Id being independent of time shows that the unconscious has its own independent existence; it has been established that the body is subject to the laws of time and space and that it is in space and time that all its actions take place. Now if the soul is simply an extension of the body, then, like the body, it too should be subject to the laws of time and space. Since observation has shown that this is not so, there is the inevitable inference that the soul by its very nature is something separate from (though not extraneous to) the body and that it exists independently. The relation of the soul to the body is not comparable to that of a machine and its movement, nor to that of a musical instrument and the music it produces. Had there been any basis for this comparison, the same laws, which apply to the body, would have affected the soul.

A branch of modern psychology which makes an empirical study of man's supernatural faculties—psychical research—does establish the existence of life after death at a purely observational level. What is most interesting is that such research does not establish mere survival; rather it establishes the survival of exactly the same personality—the entity that was known to us before death.

Man has possessed many other analyzable traits right from the very beginning, but it is only comparatively recently that they have been analyzed scientifically. For instance, dreaming is one of the oldest known activities of man. But ancient man was unaware of the psychological relevance of dreams, the facts of which have come to light only after recent scientific research. Even more interesting are quite other manifestations of the human spirit, the recent facts and figures of which give strong indications of the existence of extra-sensory perception and of the objects of this perception.

Facts strongly suggest that the universe, and the human personality, each have a dimension additional to the material one so capably and successfully explored by the natural sciences.

The first institution to conduct research in this field was established in England in 1882. It still exists today under the name of "Society for Psychical Research." It began its work on a large scale in 1889 by contacting 17,000 people who were asked whether—when they believed themselves completely awake—they had ever had a vivid impression of seeing, or being touched by a living being (who was not actually there) or inanimate object which moved apparently of its own volition or of hearing a voice which, so far as they could

discover, was not due to any external physical cause. Many other institutions from other countries conducted similar research and, by means of various experiments and demonstrations, it was shown that even after bodily death, the human personality survives in some mysterious form.

In his book *A Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion*, C.J. Ducasse observes:

These facts strongly suggest that the universe, and the human personality, each have a dimension additional to the material one so capably and successfully explored by the natural sciences.

Many other scholars who have objectively examined the evidence furnished by psychical research have felt compelled to accept the

life Hereafter as a matter of fact. C. J. Ducasse (d. 1969), Professor of Philosophy at the Brown University, has made a philosophical and psychological scrutiny of this concept. He did not believe it in the sense in which it is presented by religion, yet he held that apart from the dogmas of religion, such evidence does exist that compels us to accept the survival of life after death. After making a general survey of various investigations in the field of research, he observed:

Some of the keenest-minded and best-informed persons, who studied the evidence over many years in a highly critical spirit, eventually came to the conclusion that, in some cases at least, only the survival hypothesis remained plausible. Among such persons may be mentioned Alfred Russel Wallace, Sir William Crookes, F.W.H. Myers, Cesare Lombroso, Camille Flammarion, Sir Oliver Lodge, Dr. Richard Hodgson, Mrs. Henry Sidwick and Professor Hyslop, to name only a few of the most eminent.

This suggests that the belief in a life after death, which so many persons have found no particular difficulty in accepting as an article of religious faith, not only may be true but is perhaps capable of empirical proof; and if so, that, instead of the inventions of the theologians concerning the nature of the postmortem life, factual information regarding it may eventually be obtained.

The truth is that if life survives after death, there can be no interpretation other than a religious one.

That, in such a case, the content of this information will turn out to be useful rather than not, for the two tasks which it is the function of religion to perform, does not, of course, automatically follow.

Ducasse, while accepting life after death as a reality, has refused to accept the religious nature of this same phenomenon. This is only a matter of his own personal predilections. The truth is that if life survives after death, there can be no interpretation other than a religious one. □



THE WAY OF BALANCE AND MODERATION

Practical Behaviour

*The best way is that of moderation.
(Prophet Muhammad)*

BALANCE and moderation are of great importance in religion, but this importance is not as an eternal principle. Rather, its importance is because of practical wisdom. In this regard, two points are of great importance. One is the fact that balance is required in practical matters and not in religious beliefs or principles. As far as principles or religious beliefs are concerned, what is always desirable is the ideal. In respect of religious truth, there is no middle way.

Practical behaviour is related to external form. Depending on the prevailing conditions, adjustment can be made in the external form so that we do not clash with others.

The other point is that the way of moderation and balance is required because of practical necessity. In this world, every person has the freedom of thought. Because of this, differences arise between people. It is simply not possible to put an end to these differences and to get everyone to act and think in the same way. On account of this, in such matters you have to adopt the method of moderation and balance so that you do not clash with others and can lead your lives peacefully.

As practical behaviour is related to external form and depends on the prevailing conditions, adjustment can be made in the external form so as to live harmoniously in society. But as religious beliefs are based on eternal principles there is no question of the middle path in this domain. □



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PROPHET OF ISLAM

Love for Humankind

*The Prophet Muhammad is introduced in the Qur'an in these words:
We have sent you forth as a mercy to all mankind (21:107).*

THIS shows that his distinctive quality was that he was a blessing incarnate in word and deed. It is reported in the books of *Hadith* that, when his opponents greatly increased their persecution, his Companions asked him to curse them. At this the Prophet replied, "I have not been sent to lay a curse upon men but to be a blessing to them." His opponents continued to treat him and his Companions with injustice and cruelty, but he always prayed for them.

Once he was so badly stoned by his enemies that the blood began to spurt from all over his body. This happened when he went to Taif where the Hijaz aristocracy used to while away their summer days. When he attempted to call them to Islam, instead of listening to his words of wisdom, they set the street urchins upon him, who kept chasing him till nightfall. Even at that point, when he was utterly exhausted and bleeding from head to foot, all he said was: "O my Lord, guide my people along the true path as they are ignorant of the truth."

His heart was filled with intense love for all humankind irrespective of caste, creed, or colour. He advised his Companions to regard all people as their brothers and sisters. He added: "You are all Adam's offspring and Adam was born of clay."

***One of the lessons
the Prophet taught
was that we should
live among others
like flowers, and not
like thorns.***

All this tells us what kind of awareness he wanted to bring about in man. His mission was to bring people abreast of the reality that all men and women, although inhabiting different regions of the world, and seemingly different from one another as regards their colour, language, dress, culture, etc., were each other's blood brothers. Hence a proper relationship will be established between all human beings only if they regard one another as sisters and brothers. Only then will proper feelings of love and respect prevail throughout the world.

A true believer is one with whom others feel secure. One who returns love for hatred.

The Prophet made it clear that one who would only return love for love was on a lower ethical plane. We should never think it is only if

people treat us well, that we should treat them well. We should rather be accustomed to being good to those who are not good to us and to not wronging those who harm us.

By God, he is not a believer, by God, he is not a believer; by God, he is not a believer, with whom his neighbours are not secure.

The above teaching of the Prophet shows how much he loved and cared for all human beings. One of the lessons he taught was that we should live among others like flowers, and not like thorns, without giving trouble to anybody.

If a believer is not able to benefit others, he must at least do them no harm.

This shows that to the Prophet the man who becomes useful to others leads his life on a higher plane. But if he fails to do so, he should at least create no trouble for his fellow men. For a man to be a really good servant of God, he must live in this world as a no-problem person. There is no third option.

The Prophet moulded his own life in accordance with the ideal pattern of life which he presented to others in the form of the Quran.

The Prophet's own example is testified to by Anas ibn Malik who served the Prophet for ten years. He says that the Prophet never ever rebuked him. "When I did something, he never questioned my manner of doing it; and when I did not do something, he never questioned my failure to do it. He was the most good-natured of all men." Such conduct gained him

the respect even of his enemies and his followers stood by him through all kinds of hardship and misfortune. He applied the principles on which his own life was based in equal measure to those who followed his path and to those who had harmed or discountenanced him.

It could never happen in the present world that everyone's' thinking, tastes, aptitude, likes and dislikes exactly coincided. For many reasons, differences do arise in this world. But then, what is the permanent solution to the problem? The solution lies in tolerance, called *iraz* in Arabic. The Prophet's entire life served as a perfect example of this principle. According to his wife, Aisha, "He was a personification of the Quran."

That is to say, the Prophet moulded his own life in accordance with the ideal pattern of life which he presented to others in the form of the Quran. He never beat a servant, or a woman, or anyone else. He did, of

course, fight for what was right. Yet, when he had to choose between two alternatives, he would take the easier course, provided it involved no sin. No one was more careful to avoid sin than he. He never sought revenge—on his own behalf—for any wrong done to him personally. Only if God’s commandments had been broken would he mete out retribution for the sake of God. It was such conduct which gained the Prophet universal respect.

In the early Makkan period when the antagonists far exceeded the Prophet’s Companions in number, it often happened that when the Prophet would stand to pray, his detractors would come near him and whistle and clap in order to disturb him, but the Prophet did not even once show his anger at such acts. He always opted for the policy of tolerance and avoidance of confrontation.

When the opposition became very strong the Prophet left Makkah for Madinah. But his antagonists did not leave him in peace. They began to attack Madinah. In this way a state of war prevailed.

Since the Prophet avoided war at all costs, he strove to bring about a peace agreement between him and the Makkans. After great efforts on his part, the opponents agreed to the finalizing of a 10-year peace treaty, which was drafted and signed at the Al-Hudaibiya.

While the Al-Hudaibiya treaty was being drafted, the Makkans indulged in a number of extremely provocative acts. For instance, the agreement mentioned the Prophet’s name as ‘Muhammad the Messenger of God.’ They insisted that the phrase ‘the messenger of God’ should be taken out, and be replaced simply by ‘Muhammad, son of Abdullah’. The Prophet accepted their condition and deleted the appellation with his own hands. Similarly, they made the condition that if they could lay their hands on any Muslim they would make him a hostage, but if the Muslims succeeded in detaining any from the opponents side, they would have to set him free. The Prophet even relented on this point. For the restoration of peace in the region, the Prophet accepted a number of such clauses as were added by the opponents. In this way he set the example of peace and tolerance being linked with one another. If we desire peace, we must tolerate

The Prophet set the example of peace and tolerance being linked with one another. If we desire peace, we must tolerate many unpleasant things from others. There is no other way to establish peace in society.

many unpleasant things from others. There is no other way to establish peace in society.

Once the Prophet was seated at a place in Madinah, along with his Companions. During this time a funeral procession passed by. On seeing this the Prophet stood up. Seeing the Prophet stand, up, one of his Companions remarked that the funeral was that of a Jew, to this the Prophet replied, 'Was he not a human being?'

This incident illustrates how an atmosphere of mutual love and compassion can be brought about in the world only when we consciously rise above all insidious demarcation of caste, colour and creed. Just as the Prophet did, we too must look at all men as human beings who deserve to be respected at all events. □



Building one's life
is not like building
a child's play house.
It is a matter of
putting down roots,
and toiling patiently
ever upwards.

AT DEATH'S DOOR

Stepping into the Hereafter

DEATH is the most certain stage in life. Every person definitely has to pass through this stage. For every being that is bestowed with life, the arrival of death is a must. Every living being will one day die. Every eye that sees will one day lose its light. Every tongue that speaks will one day fall silent. Every person will one day be brought to stand before death's door. At that moment, the world will be behind him, and in front of him will be the Hereafter. He will be leaving a world that he will never visit again, and he will be entering a world that he will never be able to come out of. He will be removed from the field of action and taken to where he will have to face the eternal consequences of his actions.

Life is unreliable, while death is absolutely certain. We are alive only because we have not died as yet, and we do not know when death will happen. Every moment, we are advancing towards death. We are closer to death than to life. We have no idea of when death will arrive. It can arrive at any moment. In fact, the next moment could be of death, This is why a *Hadith* tells us to count ourselves among the dead, or the 'people of the graves'.

Every living being will one day die. Every eye that sees will one day lose its light. Every tongue that speaks will one day fall silent.

Death nullifies everything. It is the most terrifying event in our lives. If death were simply the end of life, it would not be very terrifying. If death only meant that we would no longer exist as beings that walk, see and hear, it would, despite all its terrors, be simply an event that occurred at a particular moment, rather than an issue with eternal implications. But the fact is that death is not the end of our lives. Rather, it is the beginning of a new and eternal life. Death means entry into a world based on the eternal consequences of our actions in the life before death.

Every person is travelling from life towards death. For some, this journey is for the sake of this world. For others, it is for the sake of the Hereafter. Some people are immersed in the things of this visible world. Others live in the things of the invisible world. Some spend their lives rushing about trying to fulfil their desires and satisfy their egos. Others are overwhelmed by the fear and the love of God.

In this world, the difference between these two types of people may not be apparent in all respects, but this is not so as far as what is going to happen after their deaths is concerned. He who lives in the consciousness of God and the Hereafter is saving himself, while he who lives in worldly pleasures and the desires that his ego chases is destroying himself. □



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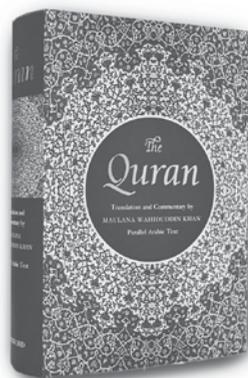
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Translated from Arabic and commentary by
Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



PROSTRATION

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Alif Lam Mim. This Book has beyond all doubt been revealed by the Lord of the Universe. Do they say, 'He has invented it himself.'? No indeed! It is the truth from your Lord to warn a people to whom, before you, no warner came, so that hopefully they may be rightly guided. (32: 1-3)

On the face of it, this is an ordinary statement consisting of just a few words. But this is a very serious and portentous claim, which in the entire history of religion, nobody has had the courage to profess, except those chosen few to whom the Book of God was in actuality revealed. Other than the appointed person, anyone who mustered the audacity to utter these words was either a trifler or a madman.

The Quran is a proof in itself. Its miraculous style, its claims that have not been proved wrong even after centuries have elapsed,—all these and similar considerations prove that it is a book sent by God. And since it is a book of God, it is absolutely necessary that everybody should pay heed to its warnings and gives serious thought to them.

It was God who created the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is in between in six Days, and then He established Himself on the throne. You have no patron nor any intercessor besides Him. So will you not pay heed? He directs all affairs from heaven to earth. Then all will again ascend to Him on a Day whose length is a thousand years by the way you measure. Such is the Knower of the unseen and the visible, the Powerful, the Merciful, who gave everything its perfect

form. He originated the creation of man from clay, then He made his progeny from an extract of a humble fluid. Then He moulded him; He breathed His Spirit into him; He gave you hearing, sight, and hearts. How seldom you are grateful! (32: 4-9)

The gradual creation of the universe, in six days meaning six stages, along with the system full of wisdom governing it, is indicative of the fact that the Creator has some special purpose behind this creation. Moreover, numerous processes are incessantly going on in the universe. This further proves that its Creator is running it in a well-planned manner. The human being is a wonderful living organism, but if his body is analyzed, it will be found that it is composed of earth elements. Then this creation does not end there, but continues eternally through the process of procreation and regeneration.

If the individual gives deep and serious consideration to these facts, his mind will be free of feelings of awe for anything except the Majesty of God. He will become a grateful subject of God. But there are very few who give deep consideration to anything. That is why there are very few people who offer praises to God and are grateful to Him. □



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ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

Abstaining from food and water is a physical act. How does this benefit a believer in the spiritual sense, or what spiritual qualities does this abstinence help one inculcate?

In the month of Ramazan, a believer abstains from food and drink from dawn till dusk. It is only after sunset that he satisfies his hunger and quenches his thirst. When a person goes through this process, he trains himself in the art of desire management and so builds up his self-control. This trait of restraint or abstinence does not remain restricted to one's intake of food, rather by exercising restraint for one month in a year, one is able to lead a life of self-discipline in all matters for the rest of the year.

The practice of fasting is also largely aimed at saving a person from distractions. It produces sincerity in him. It draws a person's attention away from the external world and into the internal world. This helps one rise from trivial issues and become more centred on higher and deeper issues of life.

The main aim of fasting is to lessen a person's dependence on material things and strengthen his spiritual resolve, so that he may enter the higher realms of piety. Fasting is thus a stimulus for spiritual and intellectual development. Once made aware of his own helplessness, he connects to God with sincere prayer.

The Quran began to be revealed during the month of Ramazan. Can you please explain the special relation between the Quran and fasting during Ramazan?

The Arabic word for fasting is *sawm* meaning abstinence or restraint from desires. The abstinence from food and water is symbolic of saving oneself from all kinds of distraction, including basic needs, for a temporary period of time. The main purpose of fasting is to go through the Quran with complete focus and dedication. This is a very serious study. So, believers are required to keep away from all other activities, and concentrate their minds totally on the study of the Quran so that they are able to discover the deep meaning in the Quran. According to a *Hadith*, "The wonders of Quran shall never cease." (*Mishkat*)

Just as taking more and more water from an ocean does not dry it up, similarly, continually reflecting on the Quran only allows its deeper meaning to unfold. Materialists think on the lines of "more and more

money” but the mindset of a believer should be “more and more wisdom from the Quran.” In other words if you dedicate the month of Ramazan to the study of Quran, you shall discover newer meanings. For instance the following verse of the Quran opens a whole new meaning to the reader: “Believers, fasting has been prescribed for you, just as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard yourselves against evil.” (2:183)

This verse highlights that fasting is a universal practice and was a common element across religions. And ever since man inhabited earth, prophets were sent to guide him and they enjoined their community to observe fasts. When man observes a fast today, he gets connected to a long history. I was gripped by the realization of this thrilling idea that those who observe fasts in the month of Ramazan become a part of that divine chain which begins from the first pious person and ends with the last man of history! The realization that you have got connected with the list of those pious and God-fearing men who led a rightly guided life is an overwhelming experience.

Fasting thus prepares a person for the study of the Quran. And when a person studies the Quran with a well-prepared mind, he can understand the teachings of the Quran in greater depth.

Many people overeat before the beginning of their fast so that they do not feel hungry during the fasting period. Also they eat elaborately at the time of breaking of their fast. What do you have to say about this trend?

The Quran has laid out detailed commandments pertaining to fasting in the month of Ramazan. The following verse signifies the unique relationship between Quran and fasting: “The month of Ramazan is the month when the Quran was sent down as guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and the criterion by which to distinguish right from wrong. Therefore, whoever of you is present in that month, let him fast.” (2:185)

According to another verse: “Believers, fasting has been prescribed for you, just as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard yourselves against evil.” (2:183)

Ramazan is the month of heightened God-consciousness, of attaining piety (*taqwa*). As I deliberated upon the verses above, I realized that *taqwa* actually, refers to sensitivity. Fasting by its very nature is an act of patience and restraint. It helps a person to attain a state of mind, which makes him a more sensitive person. In fact, those who indulge

in overeating to curb the feeling of thirst and hunger, in effect do not observe the fast as they do not allow the purpose of Ramazan to be met. Let me clarify this with the following instance from the life of the Prophet.

When Prophet Muhammad was returning from Taif, he was overwhelmed with sorrow at the response he received from the leaders of Taif. The people of Taif ordered their children to throw stones at Prophet Muhammad to drive him out of the city, causing him to bleed profusely. It was in this state of being wounded, hungry and thirsty, that God suggested turning the valley of Makkah into gold for him but the Prophet replied, "No, my Lord, but let me have enough to eat and be hungry on alternate days; then when I am hungry I shall make supplication to You and make mention of You, and when I have enough I shall praise and thank You." (*Musnad Ahmad*)

From these *Hadith*, it can be drawn that the feeling of hunger and thirst serve the purpose of inculcating sensitivity within a person by making him experience helplessness. This develops piety. Unless he is sensitive, a person cannot seriously deliberate over issues. In psychology, 'high sensitivity,' is explained as the ability to process information deeply, to concentrate deeply and be highly conscientious. High sensitivity inculcates curiosity, seriousness and all other high qualities in a person.

The author of a book on high sensitivity wrote, 'a person of high sensitivity can grasp a point with greater intensity.' This statement illustrates the purpose of fasting—to inculcate sensitivity so that one is able to understand the profound meaning of the Quran.

What is the religious and social significance of *Eid-ul-Fitr*?

Eid-ul-Fitr literally means 'festival of breaking the fast.' Like other festivals, it is a symbol of an important article of faith. It reminds one of an Islamic belief in the form of social practice.

Muslims believe that human life is divided into two parts: the pre-death period and the post-death period. One who follows divine commandments in the pre-death period will be rewarded in the post-death period.

Just before *Eid-ul-Fitr*, Muslims keep fast throughout the whole month of Ramazan. Fasting symbolizes life in the present world in which Muslims follow God's commandments. *Eid-ul-Fitr* denotes the reward that will be given by God Almighty in the Hereafter in return for our good deeds.

This festival also has a social connotation. On this day Muslims go out of their homes, offer a congregational prayer, meet their neighbours, exchange good wishes with other people and eat and drink without any restriction. All these activities are reminders of life in Paradise.

Eid-ul-Fitr may be a Muslim festival, but Muslims, like other communities, live in a society, in a neighbourhood. This makes it automatically a social festival. Therefore, Muslims meet not only with their religious brothers, but also with neighbours of other denominations and with their colleagues at work or in business. □



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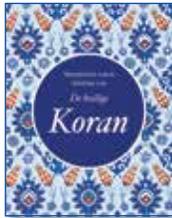
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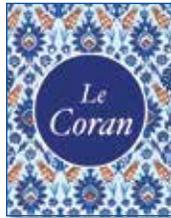
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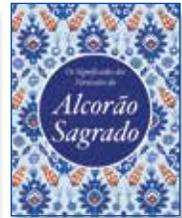
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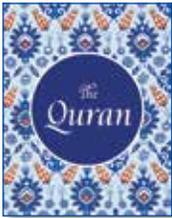
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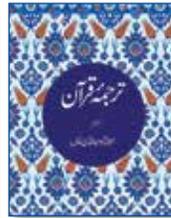
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