

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



The more we give the more we receive.

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

Spirit of Islam is a monthly magazine which is now in its seventh 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

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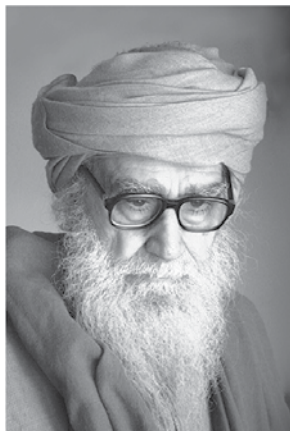
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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

THE BABRI MOSQUE VERDICT

Hope of a New Dawn

THE Supreme Court of India announced its final verdict on 9th November, 2019 on the issue of Babri *Masjid*. In a unanimous judgement, the five-judge Bench allocated the entire disputed site to the Hindu plaintiffs and compensated the Muslims with five acres of land in Ayodhya for the construction of a mosque.

I have been associated with Babri Mosque issue since a long time. Around 1941, I visited Ayodhya to see the mosque myself and now vividly recollect the scene that I had witnessed then. It was an uninhabited mosque. I could see no sign of any daily congregational prayers taking place there. I offered *Tahyatul Masjid namaaz* (a two-unit non-obligatory prayer performed on the occasion of entering a mosque). I was alone there in the mosque.

When the incident of the demolition of the Babri mosque took place, the issue found a lot of prominence in the media and a lot of activities took place in its aftermath. I too was involved in the nationwide efforts to guide the people on the matter.

1. The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims 2019, Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Jordan.

I have always reiterated that the only solution to the issue of Babri mosque is its relocation. My suggestion was completely in line with the Islamic Shariah. The *Hanafi* school of Jurisprudence (A Muslim school of thought that interprets Islamic injunctions according to the principles laid down by Imam Abu Hanifa and his disciples) developed the notion that the land where a mosque is once built becomes mosque for eternity. But this notion is only upheld by those who observe *Hanafi* school of Jurisprudence. There is no mention of this either in the Quran or *Hadith* (*Hadith* is a record of the sayings and the deeds of the Prophet Muhammad). As per a *Hadith* recorded in *Sahih Muslim*, the Prophet Muhammad said, "The entire earth has been made a mosque for you. So, wherever you are at the time of prayer, pray there." (Book: 4, Hadith: 1057)

The Prophet of Islam said that the entire planet earth had been given the status of a mosque and prayer offered anywhere would be considered as being offered in a mosque. What I had proposed for the mosque in Ayodhya was completely in line with the Quran. As per a verse in the Quran:

We have appointed for every community ways of worship to observe. Let them not dispute with you on this matter. (22: 67)

The above verse gives a principle to the believers where it is incumbent upon them to ensure that they do not allow an issue to become a controversy. Instead, they should resolve it in a non-controversial way. In today's parlance, I would say that if an issue comes up, Muslims should manage it, instead of turning it into a controversy. They should manage it, and resolve it peacefully.

This judgement of the Supreme Court gives a great opportunity for Muslims. 5-acres is a large piece of land and from what I had seen of the Babri *Masjid*, five acres is almost double its area. Muslims should make use of this land to create an Islamic centre, a mosque and a seminary.

It is my understanding, that the Supreme Court of India has given a correct judgement. It is completely as per facts and the right verdict. That is why in complete consonance with this judgement I accept it fully. I hope that the land which has been granted by the Supreme Court is accepted by Muslims wholeheartedly with gratitude and without any conditions. □

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

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FROM THE EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Dr Farida Khanam is an author, editor, translator, public speaker and former professor of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Among her books are 'A Simple Guide to Sufism' and 'A Study of World's Major Religions'. She has translated into English many books authored by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. Currently the chairperson of CPS International, she is a regular contributor of articles to various publications. Dr Khanam has edited Maulana's English translation of the Quran and has also translated his Urdu commentary of the Quran into English. She can be reached at hub@thespiritofislam.org

COMPLAINING: A SIGN OF WEAKNESS

COMPLAINING is a fatal trait. It is the habit of complaining that is at the root of various social problems. When several people live together, it is natural that they will have differences, which are often then allowed to turn into complaints against each other. These soon get transformed into enmity, abuse and a never-ending cycle of hatred.

The only solution to complaints is not to take them seriously. Instead, they should simply be forgotten. In the event of a complaint against someone, there's no need for you to investigate it or to remember it. Instead, you must forget it—and you should do this on a unilateral basis. It is natural for complaints to arise when living together with others. But the solution to the problem of complaints is that you should not go about trying to verify them in a bid to solve them.

In this world, it is simply impossible to stop complaints. The only practical thing that you can do in this regard is to not store in your mind any complaints you might have against others. This is the only solution to the problem. If you want to live in this world with a positive mind, and also to leave this world with a positive mind, you really have no realistic option but this.

In this world, it is simply impossible to stop complaints. The only practical thing that you can do in this regard is to not store in your mind any complaints you might have against others.

Complaints are always a serious matter. That is why the only practical solution to the problem of complaints is not to make them a subject of discussion and debate. Instead, you should think that the only way to solve them is to forget them, not to find out if they are true or false.

Experience suggests that investigations never put an end to complaints. In fact, they often further complicate them. Given this, forgetting complaints is the only practical way to solve them. □

Dr. Farida Khanam

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WHAT TO DO IN AN UNFAVOURABLE SITUATION?

Right Reaction

IN this life the choice is not always between right and wrong. The choice is rather between the lesser evil and the greater evil. In every situation, things must be examined objectively. Try to discover which option is better for you—better, not in terms of good and bad, but in terms of lesser and greater evil. When the option is between these two opposites, no wise person will opt for a course of action that will lead to the latter.

Opting for the lesser evil is not simply avoidance. It has two very clear benefits: first, it saves you from further loss and second, you are able to economize on your time and will be able to achieve your objectives by re-planning your activities.

No situation is unfavourable in an absolute sense. It can only be so in a limited sense. A situation being unfavourable only means that one way is closed to you while, at the same time, there are other ways open to you. You can carry on your journey simply by changing your direction. When you face such a situation, do not delay but re-assess your plans and establish your priorities along new lines. Always remember that although others can create hurdles in your life, no one has the power to decide your destiny. Your destiny is in your own hands, and, by a re-examination of the situation, you can reformulate your plans and attain your objectives simply by following an alternative path. If you have to face some loss, take it as being temporary. No loss is so drastic as to be permanent.

Always remember that although others can create hurdles in your life, no one has the power to decide your destiny.

At every moment, conditions keep on changing. Loss and gain are also subject to change. Situations, whether positive or negative, are temporary in nature. So, when you face some unwanted situation, do not despair. Just have faith that, sooner or later, the problem will be resolved.

Situations in life are like day and night, with every dark night giving way to a bright new day. The same is true of the life of every human being. A well known poet has rightly said: *Raat din gardish mein hain*

saat asman, ho rahe ga kuch na kuch ghabrayein kya (Seven heavens are on the move every day and night, something new will happen, then why feel frustrated?) This is the law of nature and no one has the power to change it.

History is full of such instances, both on individual and national levels. Every individual faces some unwanted situation or the other, but then, after some time, everything comes back to normal. The case of the nation is identical. Since no one can change the course of history or the facts with which it presents us, we should take a lesson from it.

An unfavourable situation, no matter what, is nothing but a new challenge. Try to meet that challenge and very soon you will find that it was truly a blessing in disguise for you. It was meant to provide you with a stepping stone to better things. □



**WE LOOK FORWARD
TO YOUR FEEDBACK**

Dear Readers,

Spirit of Islam team believes in the involvement of readers to enhance the quality of the magazine. Your precious views, suggestions, and recommendations in this regard are earnestly solicited and will be readily acknowledged. Kindly mail us your views at:

thecentreforpeace@gmail.com

TOWARDS GLOBAL PEACE

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



PEACE BETTER THAN POLITICAL SUPREMACY

PEOPLE are generally obsessed with politics. They believe that acquiring a territory and establishing political rule over it, is the greatest kind of success. According to the Quran, peace is the *summum bonum*. While political supremacy is limited in its scope, the ambit of peace is unlimited. Peace is greater than political rule. In the chapter entitled *Al-Fath* (Victory), the Quran refers to the Hudaibiya agreement—a peace treaty drawn up between the Prophet and his opponents, which was finalized in the year AD 628. The Quran mentions it as a “clear” victory (48: 1)—a victory which is beyond any doubt. Then in the chapter entitled *Al-Nasr* (Help), the Quran refers to political victory over Makkah in AD 630. Here the Quran uses the word *fath* (victory).

This difference in terminology proves that, according to the Quran, political victory is the superseding of opponents in the control of a particular geographical area, whereas establishing peace, a “clear” victory, is the greater victory. It means that establishing peace has more importance than a political victory. Why is there this difference? Because political victory gives you only one thing and that is administrative control over a piece of land. But peace has greater potential than this. Peace opens the door to multiple opportunities and by availing of those opportunities,

Peace opens the door to multiple opportunities and by availing of those opportunities, you can achieve all kinds of success, including political rule.

you can achieve all kinds of success, including political rule. The early history of Islam is clear proof of this. For example, before the peace agreement of Hudaibiya was signed, Islam seemed to be trapped in a blind alley. But after the Hudaibiya agreement, the Prophet of Islam and his Companions endeavoured to avail of all those opportunities that had been opened up to them and, within two years, Islam had spread all over the Arabian peninsula.

Peace is a bilateral issue, but peace can be established only by a unilateral initiative, otherwise there can be no peace. This Quranic concept of peace is set forth in the chapter entitled *Al-Anfal* (The Spoils of War) of the Quran. The translation of the relevant verse is as follows:

Peace is a bilateral issue, but peace can be established only by a unilateral initiative, otherwise there can be no peace.

and put your trust in God. Surely, it is He Who is All Hearing and All Knowing. Should they seek to deceive you, God is enough for you: it was He Who strengthened you with His help, and rallied the faithful around you, and bound their hearts together." (8: 61-62)

Where there has been a controversy between two parties, and finally an agreement has been reached, each party fears that the other party may not strictly follow the agreement or in other ways will try to act deceitfully. This kind

of suspicion is a great obstacle to establishing peace. But the Quran advises believers to place their trust in God. They ought not to think about the behaviour of the other party, but simply believe that God will be on their side and that the peace settlement will be successful.

Trust in God means, in effect, trust in the laws of nature. Following the laws of nature designed by the Creator is the only practicable course to adopt in this world. If you insist on raising controversial points, you will arouse the ego of the other party and the desired settlement will become more difficult to achieve than ever before. Insistence on your own point only causes a reaction, i.e., the other party becomes more cautious, and then reaching a settlement becomes almost impossible. Avoid controversy at any cost, as this will enable you to discover the common ground between the two parties. □



*Self-control is undoubtedly
a very great strength.*

BELIEF IN THE REVEALED BOOKS

The perpetuity of God's Guidance

IT is a matter of Islamic belief that God, in His mercy, has sent prophet after prophet to lead people forth from darkness to light. The belief in all of God's revealed books forms an integral part of Islamic faith.

These divine books commanded justice in everything, and exhorted men to repent and mend their ways.

The Quran describes *Torah* as *Furqan* (the Discriminator between right and wrong). It says: "We gave Moses and Aaron the criterion of right and wrong and a light and Reminder for the righteous (21: 48). *Furqan* means the ideological standard which enables man to distinguish between Truth and falsehood. Light means divine guidance, which leads a man out of the darkness of the wrong path and puts him in the light of the straight path. In this way, God has arranged for the guidance of man through His messengers.

But, it is possible for God's guidebook to provide guidance in the real sense only when a man is anxious about his fate in the Hereafter. This anxiety makes him so serious that he attaches more importance to Truth and righteousness than to any other thing.

The Books Mentioned in the Quran

Of the holy books, four find mention in the Quran: the *Sahifa*, scrolls given to Abraham; the *Tawrat*, the revelations made to Moses; the *Zabur*, the Psalms given to David; the *Injil*, the teachings given to Jesus. It is a belief of a Muslim that each of these (as well as every other Book sent by God to His Prophets) was originally a complete revelation. However, for a variety of reasons, most of these revealed books sent by God could not be preserved. For instance, the Quran mentions the scriptures given to Abraham (87: 19) as *Sahifa*, but these are no longer in existence and are lost completely. Others were changed in various ways by human intervention.

Historians agree that the Quran, the last of the divine books has been preserved from human interpolation.

The Torah

The term *Towrah* is simply the Arabic equivalent for the Hebrew Torah, and normally understood as 'The Law' given by God to the Prophet

Moses. The Quran gives abundant testimony to the *Towrah*, and it is mentioned more than any other revealed book. Sometimes it is simply called 'The Law'.

'We have revealed the *Torah*, in which there is guidance and light. By it the prophets who were obedient to Us judged the Jews, and so did the rabbis and the priests, according to God's Book which had been entrusted to their care; and to which they were witnesses. Have no fear of man; fear Me, and do not sell My revelations for a paltry sum. Those who do not judge by what God has sent down are deniers of truth.

We prescribed for them in [the *Torah*]: a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and a wound for a wound. But, if anyone forgoes it, this shall be for him an expiation.

Those who do not judge by what God has sent down are wrongdoers! (5: 44-45).

The Quran, the Book of God, enshrines teachings, which were basically the same as were to be found in previously revealed scriptures.

From these verses, it can be seen that the Quran calling the *Torah* a book of 'guidance and light' testifies that God had revealed it as the Law for the Jews.

Sometimes in the Quran, the name *Towrah* refers not only to the books of the Prophet Moses, but to the entire Hebrew scripture of the Jews, especially in the verses, which mention the *Towrah* and *Injil* together. 'He has

revealed unto you (Muhammad) the scripture with truth, confirming that which was (revealed) before it, even as He revealed the *Torah* and the *Injil*.' (3: 3).

When the Quran uses the expression 'People of the Book', it always means all the three communities: the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims: People of the Book, why do you dispute about Abraham when the *Torah* and Gospel were only sent down after him. Do you not use your reason? (3: 65)

According to the Quran, the *Towrah*, the book that God revealed to Moses for the guidance of the Children of Israel (*Bani Israil*), did in fact contain guidance and God's commands, admonition and a clear explanation of many things of the world, and of God's mercy. There are many verses regarding the granting of a book to Moses in which the *Towrah* is mentioned although not by name. The tablets (*alwah*) are also mentioned and they mean the same scripture:

'And We wrote for him upon the Tablets an admonition and details of all things, then [bade him], 'Hold fast to them; and command your people to follow them in their best sense'. (7: 145)

But when Moses went back to his people with the Law inscribed on the Tablets, they had meanwhile turned away from God and the Truth and he became very angry. He prayed for them and they repented. 'When his anger had subsided, Moses took up the Tablets upon which was inscribed a pledge of guidance and mercy for those who fear their Lord.' (7: 150-154).

The *Towrah*, as originally revealed to Moses, must have been in the Hebrew language. But there is no copy of the original Book given to Moses extant today. As a matter of fact, during their long and turbulent history, the Jews repeatedly lost their revealed books. The Old Testament is considered by today's Jews as the Book revealed by God. But it cannot simply be equated with the *Towrah* mentioned in the Quran. The reason for this is the Old Testament contains also the *Zabur*, (Psalms) the book of guidance given to the Prophet David. The *Zabur* is mentioned in the Quran as a revelation separate from the *Towrah*.

Historians agree that the Quran, the last of the divine books has been preserved from human interpolation.

The *Zabur* (Psalms)

The term *Zabur* is the Arabic equivalent of the Hebrew word '*zimir*', which is usually translated into English as 'Psalm'. It was the book of revelation given to the Prophet David. In the Hebrew and Christian scriptures it is a part of the Old Testament. David was a prophet, but he was also a great ruler. He was divinely inspired to sing hymns praising God and His creation in his melodious and sonorous voice. These hymns now constitute the Psalms.

In the Quran, the Psalms is mentioned by name only three times:

'...And to David We gave the Psalms.' (4: 163)

"Your Lord knows best about everyone in the heavens and on the earth. We gave some prophets more than others: We gave David the Psalms." (17: 55)

'We have already written in the Psalms following the Reminder, 'My righteous servants shall inherit the earth.' (21: 105)

Thus the Quran, and also the *Hadith*, very clearly confirm the Muslim belief in four heavenly books. The Quran mentions no other such heavenly books, though it mentions many prophets, some of them by name, and attributes many divine revelations to them.

David, to whom God revealed the Psalms, was gifted with great eloquence and a beautiful voice. All gifts were given to the prophets according to the needs of the world and the times in which they lived. The Psalms were intended to be sung for the worship of God and the celebration of God's greatness.

The Psalms are still extant and have been incorporated into the Bible. However, their present form may possibly be different from the original. Nonetheless, to a great extent, the Psalms retain their original state.

The *Injil* (Gospel)

The *Injil* is the revelation given to Prophet Jesus. The term *Injil* is derived from a Greek word, which, when translated into English means 'gospel' and it occurs twelve times in the Quran.

In Muslim belief Jesus, the son of Mary, is considered to be the Prophet immediately preceding the Prophet of Islam. His birth was miraculous and by the grace of God he was endowed with a life-giving spirit. Both he and his pious mother, Mary, are mentioned in the Quran many times.

'We sent after them Jesus, the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel; and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy.' (57: 27)

This particular verse of the Quran very clearly states that the Prophet Jesus was given the real Gospel, which stressed the compassion and mercy of God. Most of the time, whenever mentioned in the Quran, Gospel is coupled with the *Torah* or the law given to Moses. But there is always emphasis on the continuity of revelation and its culmination with the final revelation that is the Quran.

'He has sent down the Book to you with truth, which fulfils (the predictions) in the Scriptures that preceded it: He sent down the Torah and the Gospel.' (3: 3)

'God will instruct him in the Book and in wisdom and in the Torah and in the Gospel.' (3: 48)

The *Injil* mentioned in the Quran is the book revealed to the Prophet Jesus. The Gospel of the Christians is a compilation made one hundred years after the prophethood of Jesus, and was written down in Greek. Besides the Gospels attributed to the four apostles (John, Luke, Mark, and Matthew), it contains letters of Paul and Peter to the early Christian communities, as well as other written material. That is why the Quran and the *Hadith* often refer to changes made in the original scriptures. All heavenly books were sent by God for the guidance of humankind and to enable their adherents to judge all issues according to the divine laws as set forth in these Books.

The Quran is a sacred book sent by the Lord of all creation. It is a book for all human beings, because it has been sent by that Divine Being who is God of all of us.

The Quran

The Quran, the Book of God, enshrines teachings, which were basically the same as were to be found in previously revealed scriptures. But these ancient scriptures are no longer preserved in their original state. Later additions and deletions were made, whereas the Quran is preserved in its original state.

The Quran has 114 chapters. Its contents in a nutshell are: belief in one God, and considering oneself answerable to Him; firm belief that the Prophet Muhammad is the messenger of God who conveyed the message and that man's eternal salvation rests thereon.

The position of the Quran is not just that it is one of the many revealed scriptures but that it is the authentic divine Book. When a believer in the previous revealed scripture turns to the Quran, it does not mean that he is rejecting his own belief, but rather amounts to his having re-discovered his own faith.

The Quran is a sacred book sent by the Lord of all creation. It is a book for all human beings, because it has been sent by that Divine Being who is God of all of us.

The Quran is no new heavenly scripture. It is only an authentic edition of the previous heavenly scriptures. In this respect, the Quran is a book for all human beings, of all nations. It is the expression of God's mercy for one and for all. It is a complete message sent by God for every one of us.

According to the Quran, Islam means submission. The religion of Islam is so named because it is based on obedience to God. A true believer in Islam is one who subordinates his thinking to God, who follows God's dictates in all aspects of his life.

Islam is the religion of the entire universe, for the entire universe and all its parts are functioning in accordance with the law laid down by God.

Such behaviour is also desired of man. Man should also lead his life as God's obedient servant just as the rest of the universe is fully subservient to God. The only difference is that the universe has submitted to God compulsorily, while man is required to submit to the will of God by his own choice.

When man adopts Islam, first of all it is his thinking which is affected by Islam, then his desires, his feelings, his interests, his relations, his love and his hatred. All are coloured by his obedience to God's will.

When man, in his daily life comes under God's command, his behaviour with people and his dealings are all moulded by the demands of Islam. From inside to outside he becomes a person devoted to God.

Man, as the Quran tells us, is God's servant. Indeed, the only proper way for man to live in this world is to live as the servant of God. Islam, in fact, is another name for this life of servitude to God. Where the Islamic life is devoted to the service of God, the un-Islamic life unashamedly flouts the will of God. Islam teaches man to lead an obedient life and surrender himself completely to the will of God. It is those people who do so will share God's blessings in the next world. This is the essence of the teachings of the Quran. □

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IN GIVING, WE RECEIVE

Glimpses from the Muslim History

DURING the Caliphate of the second Caliph Umar, a Christian merchant entered the Islamic frontiers from the river Euphrates with his horses for trade. Ziyad bin Hadeer, who was appointed at the frontiers to oversee imports and exports, demanded tax from the merchant which he paid. He returned through the same route taking with him his unsold horses. Ziyad again demanded tax on these horses. The merchant felt a strong objection to it. He left his unsold horse under the care of his servants and travelled to Madinah in order to lodge a complaint with the Caliph himself. After reaching Madinah, he narrated his ordeal to Umar and mentioned that he has been asked unfairly to pay taxes on his unsold horses. Umar listened to the complaint and replied, "Your complaint has been taken care of."

The merchant left disappointed as he felt that the Caliph had not accorded much importance to his grievance. He came to the check port of the Euphrates and offered the tax amount which was demanded by Ziyad before. This time, Ziyad did not accept the offered money and said that he had been commanded by the Caliph not to impose tax upon him.

The Christian merchant was really impressed to know that the Caliph's decision was so swift that the justice he asked reached there before him.

Ali was the fourth rightly-guided Caliph. Once his armour got stolen. He came to know that the stolen armour was with a Jew. He put the case before the court of *Qazi* (judge) Shuraih in Kufa. To verify his claim, Ali presented two witnesses. One was his servant Qanbar, while the second was his own son Hasan. Justice Shuraih objected by saying that testimony of a son is not acceptable to support the claim of his father. He further said that only one solitary witness is not enough to prove a claim. Therefore, Justice Shuraih dismissed the petition, and the armour remained in possession of the Jew.

This incidence left the Jew overwhelmed. He said, "This episode reminds me of the conduct of the prophets where a *Qazi* announces his judgement against the ruler." Soon after, the Jew returned the armour to Ali saying that it indeed belonged to Ali and that Ali's claim was, in fact, true. (*Kanz Al-Ammal*)

During the reign of Umayyads, a grand *Jamia* mosque was erected in Damascus. On one side of the mosque was an ancient church. Muslims wished to include a part of the church in the mosque, but the Christians did not agree to this development. Caliph Abdul Malik offered a considerable amount of money, but the Christians did not agree. Consequently, a part of the mosque remained incomplete.

Then came the reign of the Caliph Waleed bin Abdul Malik, Muslims tried again to get hold of a part of the church to complete the construction of the mosque. The Christians remained steadfast again. Waleed bin

No nation can aspire to be at the forefront of worldly affairs unless it carves for itself the image of a giver group.

Abdul Malik used force and got the possession of the land unrightfully. He included this land in the completion of the mosque. Many years passed. Umar bin Abdul Aziz became the Caliph. His fame as a just and fair ruler spread far and wide. The Christians decided to meet him and present their grievance. After hearing their complaint, Caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz commanded that the unrightful construction over the church land be razed and the land be handed over to the Christians.

This judgement proved hard for the Muslims. They protested against razing the mosque in which they had called people for prayers and performed prayers. Umar bin Abdul Aziz replied, "Be whatever it may. If this was a place of prayer for the Christians, it must be duly returned to the Christians."

Now, it was the turn of the Christians to be enthralled. They had a change of mind. They said, "Our claim has proved to be true. We need no more than this. We now give this piece of land as gift to the mosque." (*Tareekh-e-Baladhuri*)

In this world, one who gives; receives. One who always seeks to receive, will eventually lose. This is the unshakeable law of the world. This law has always existed and will exist forever. No nation can aspire to be at the forefront of worldly affairs unless it carves for itself the image of a giver group. The recent Babri Mosque verdict announced by the Indian Supreme Court is a great opportunity for the Muslims to carve out this image. Acceptance of the verdict wholeheartedly will open up new horizons and prospects for the Muslims in the subcontinent. □



ATHEISM

Reasoning

ATHEISM is an outcome of being against theism. It does not result from a discovery of the non-existence of God. Earlier atheism was based on scientific validation. However, it has now lost its foundations and adherence to it has become anachronistic in nature. Those who claim scientific backing for atheism now have observations of other scientific authorities which run contrary to their claim.

Einstein when asked whether he was an atheist replied, "You may call me an agnostic, but I do not share the crusading spirit of the professional atheist whose fervour is mostly due to a painful act of liberation from the fetters of religious indoctrination received in youth". (*Letter to Guy H Raner Jr*)

This means scientists are not in a position to say that there is a God, they can just take a sceptical stand on the existence of God. This is because the accepted base for belief in something in the intellectual world is scientific. Since there is no clear scientific discovery on the non-existence of God, this is still subject to interpretation.

Towards the end of the 19th century, there was a strong wave of what was popularly called 'scientific atheism'. The argument often offered to negate the existence of God was His being invisible. But new scientific investigations, carried out at the beginning of the 20th century started turning the tide against the credibility of this position. It became apparent and accepted that there are many aspects of nature that are invisible yet they exist. One of the books written on this new world discovered by science is *Science and the Unseen World* by Sir Arthur Eddington.

At the beginning of the 20th century Sir James Jeans declared that the universe which had been discovered by modern science was not compatible with the mechanical interpretation that had gained ground since past several decades. The age of quantum mechanics has established that nothing is fully observable. Contrary to previous

One of the most amazing qualities of the universe is that there is no interpretation or explanation of it, other than that which allows for God's existence, despite the fact that the best brains in every age have attempted to unravel its mysteries.

belief, it was not the atom that was the last fundamental particle that constituted matter; rather there were unobservable subatomic particles that served as the building blocks of atoms. In a book published in 1988, entitled *A Brief History of Time*, Stephen W. Hawking (one of the foremost physicists of present times 1942-2018) explains the Big Bang Theory, according to which the universe is constantly expanding.

After working out the relevant mathematical equations, Hawking reached the conclusion that the expansion of the universe is taking place according to a well-calculated scheme. The initial rate of expansion must have been fixed with great accuracy so that it would always be less than the critical rate, i.e., the rate at which the universe would begin to collapse again. This view cannot be explained unless it is accepted that the rate of expansion of the universe has been determined with the utmost precision. Stephen Hawking writes:

It would be very difficult to explain why the universe should have begun in just this way, except as the act of God who intended to create beings like us.

One of the most amazing qualities of the universe is that there is no interpretation or explanation of it, other than that which allows for God's existence, despite the fact that the best brains in every age have attempted to unravel its mysteries. It has been claimed that the universe has always been in existence in its present form. It has also been claimed that it came into being on its own and that it goes on its own.

Cause and effect have been said to have created everything, and attempts have also been made to prove the law of evolution to be the creator of the universe; which however can be only a process of nature, but never its creator. The more a man learns about the universe, the more absurd do these theories appear to him; the stranger does it seem that something, or some being other than God Almighty should be the Lord and Master of the universe. The universe, by its very existence, testifies to the fact that God is its Creator. Whatever arguments or opposing opinions have been expressed to propagate this theory have proved erroneous by the knowledge acquired to date through human research. □



*Nobody can be given a blessing bigger
and greater than patience.*

JESUS CHRIST AND ISLAM

Shared Teachings

Those (the previous prophets) were the people whom God guided. Follow their guidance. (6: 90)

THE above verse of the Quran instructs the Prophet Muhammad to follow the guidance of the prophets that came before him. By extension, all the followers of Prophet Muhammad must also seek guidance from the lives of the other prophets. Each believer must evaluate the situation one faces, and then, whilst examining the lives of other prophets, should determine in which prophet's story, a similar example can be found. One's response to this situation should be the same as that of the prophets.

A major portion of the Quran is dedicated to the exemplary lives of the prophets. Jesus—one such prophet—is frequently mentioned in the Quran as “The Messiah,” “A Mercy,” “Prophet,” “Messenger,” “Word from God,” “Spirit,” “A Sign,” “One brought near (to God),” “Upright,” “Servant,” “Eminent,” “Blessed,” “A Witness,” and “A Parable.”

He is honoured everywhere by Muslims. Mary, the mother of Jesus, described in Quran as “one exalted above all womankind,” has a whole chapter of the Quran (number 19) named after her, which tells of the miraculous birth of Jesus. The story begins with an angel announcing the birth of a holy son to Mary, who, being a chaste woman, was quite distraught at this news. But the angel reassured her that this was the will of God, that it was not a difficult thing for Him and that it was a sign and a blessing to all humankind.

The Quran further clarifies that his creation was no different from that of the first human being: “Jesus in the sight of God is like Adam. He created him from dust, then said to him, ‘Be!’ and he was.” (3: 59)

When Mary gave birth to Jesus and brought him to her people, they all pointed their fingers at her. But she was told by God to remain silent and to point to the baby. As the people were wondering how they could talk to a child in the cradle, the baby Jesus performed his first miracle by saying these fine words: “I am God's servant. He has given me the

Each believer must evaluate the situation one faces, and then, whilst examining the lives of other prophets, should determine in which prophet's story, a similar example can be found.

Book and made me a prophet; He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined upon me prayer and almsgiving throughout my life. He has made me dutiful toward my mother, and He has not made me arrogant or wicked. Blessed was I on the day I was born, and blessed I shall be on the day I die and the day I am raised to life again.”

(19: 30-33)

When Jesus attained manhood, God bestowed upon him “scriptures and wisdom, along with the *Torah* and the Gospel.” He was also given the power to perform a number of miracles, such as fashioning a living bird out of clay; giving sight to the blind; healing a leper and raising the dead to life; he also had the wisdom to inform people what they ate and stored up in their houses.

Jesus Christ meant to put an end to the root cause of all conflicts. Thus, paving the way for the other person to realize and make amends for his behaviour.

From Jesus’ life we can draw many lessons that can provide us with wonderful guidance. The Quran repeatedly mentions Jesus Christ, and we can learn much from his life.

Unilateral Good Character

Jesus Christ says:

“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you”. (LUKE 6: 27-28)

The same teaching is echoed in the Quran:

And good deeds and evil deeds are not alike. Repel evil with good and he who is your enemy will become your dearest friend. (41: 34)

This is a practical code of conduct for us, showing us the way to live in peace and harmony.

Duty Consciousness

When some people asked Jesus what they should do in the face of the oppression of the Romans ruling over them, he said:

Give to Caesar what is due to the Caesar. And give to God what is due to God. (Matthew 22: 21)

Similarly, a *Hadith* cited by Al-Bukhari says:

Give the ruler his rights. Ask for your rights from God.

Peace under all circumstances

Jesus said: To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him, who takes away your goods, do not ask them back." (Luke 6: 29-30)

What Jesus Christ meant here was to put an end to the root cause of all conflicts. Thus, paving the way for the other person to realize and make amends for his behaviour.

Jesus taught no false worship, but only preached the unity of his Creator. On the Day of Judgement, God will question him: "Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to people, 'Take me and my mother as two deities besides God?'" He will answer, "Glory be to You! How could I ever say that to which I have no right?" (5: 116) And he will add: "I told them only what You commanded me to, 'Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.'" (5: 117)

The Quran mentions: "Of the People of the Book, there are some who stand by their covenant; they recite the word of God during the night and prostrate themselves before Him, who believe in God and the Last Day, who enjoin justice and forbid evil and vie with each other in good works. These are righteous men." (3: 113-14) The Quran welcomes them to a common faith, saying: "People of the Book, let us come to a word common to us that we shall worship none but God and that we shall associate no partner with Him and that none of us shall take others, besides God, for lords." (3: 64) □



Patience is no retreat. Patience only amounts to taking the initiative along the path of wisdom and reason as opposed to the path of emotions.

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



GOD'S BOUNTIES

IN the Chapter titled *Al-Rahman* in the Quran the phrase 'Which of your Lord's wonders would you deny?' appears several times. The Arabic word "*ālā*" that appears in this verse is generally translated as 'bounties'. It does not signify ordinary bounties, but, rather, wondrous bounties.

This chapter of the Quran mentions many of God's bounties, and after that it repeatedly says, "Which of your Lord's wonders would you deny?" By 'deny' is meant to ignore or to not acknowledge.

Man has been given intelligence in order to see, reflect on and acknowledge the wondrous bounties of God and then fully surrender to the One who has brought them all into being.

Most of us blatantly ignore the innumerable wondrous bounties that God has blessed us with. At every moment we see, encounter or experience these bounties, yet we never acknowledge, think about or reflect on them. We simply take them for granted. That is why we do not give them any importance. We simply do not respond as we should.

This is the greatest possible crime on our part. Man has been given intelligence in order to see, reflect on and acknowledge these wondrous bounties of God and then fully surrender to the One who has brought them all into being. Man will be taken to task for this in the Hereafter. Those who use their reason and lead a life of acknowledgement of God's blessings will be given a high reward for this in the Hereafter.

A life of faith is another name for a life where one has truly realized God. Such a person discovers the wondrous bounties of God and leads a life in constant acknowledgment and gratitude. □



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INDIRECT GAIN

Looking beyond the Apparent

THE 1990 FIFA World Cup, held in Italy, was telecast in India by Doordarshan (an autonomous public service broadcaster founded by the Government of India). According to an advance estimate of the cost, the coverage was going to cost an expenditure of about Rs. 10 million for Doordarshan. (*The Times of India*, June 16, 1990).

Some undertakings, to all appearances, are actually no-profit ventures because there is no obvious, direct advantage in them. Yet indirect yield is frequently far greater than that of a venture which offers direct gain.

Ostensibly, this was going to be an inequitable bargain, with Doordarshan doing all the spending and receiving nothing in return. But the estimate did not tell the whole story, for Doordarshan finally made a profit of Rs. 20 million out of their coverage—a highly profitable venture!

By investing Rs. 10 million, Doordarshan earned Rs. 30 million. The gain, however, was indirect. How, in such an undertaking, did Doordarshan manage to make such a profit, when there could be no direct gain from the viewers? The answer is through advertisements. Whenever a programme of general interest is being telecast,

advertisements, paid for by various companies, are flashed on the screen from time to time, generally for the duration of a few seconds each. These advertisements are charged for at very high rates, and are one of the greatest sources of income for the television industry.

The average individual is generally aware only of such benefits as can be directly accrued, and hardly ever comes to know of methods of indirect gain. Such a superficial grasp of affairs can never bring any great success in life. The really wise person is always on the look-out for indirect ways of making a profit, because that is so often more rewarding than direct earning. Some undertakings, to all appearances, are actually no-profit ventures because there is no obvious, direct advantage in them. Yet indirect yield is frequently far greater than that of a venture which offers direct gain.

This is a very useful formula in life, and those who know its secrets will be the ones to achieve the greatest success. Having an eye only for direct gain will never carry one to any great pinnacle of success. □

UNANTICIPATED CIRCUMSTANCES

Think before You Act

A WOMAN belonging to Lima in South America failed to find a satisfactory job. She made up her mind to try her luck in North America. Too poor to afford an air fare, she conceived the notion of shutting herself inside a suitcase and dispatched herself as a piece of luggage.

The plane which carried her landed at the Los Angeles International airport. All the bags of the passengers were unloaded from the airplane for collection except one. The police, therefore, intervened to open this abandoned suitcase and take into custody the goods inside so that it could be handed over to the claimant. Much to their horror, they unlocked it to find the corpse of a woman. Detectives were called in to investigate the case. They said:

“The woman may have been crushed by the weight of other luggage”. (UPI)

This incident serves to illustrate one of life’s bitter truths: taking whatever steps we feel are necessary does not, in itself, ensure our success. This is because there are so many external and unforeseen factors involved which determine the outcome of our actions. We must take into account whenever we are deciding upon a course of action. It is only when these factors are in consonance with the steps taken, that we can hope to reach our destination.

This state of affairs takes a more critical turn when the offender is a leader and he goes wrong in framing a policy which involves the whole nation. This is bound to cause widespread misery, if not total destruction. It is, therefore, imperative that a leader be as discreet and careful as possible in his decision-making. He should consider the possible pros and cons. He should look before he leaps. His failing to do so would amount to an unpardonable offence. It would be far better for him to take no action at all than to plunge the whole nation into strife and torment. □

We must take into account external and unforeseen factors whenever we are deciding upon a course of action. It is only when these factors are in consonance with the steps taken, that we can hope to reach our destination.



GAINING LOST RESPECT

Be a Giver Member of Society

MUSLIMS seem to have fallen in public opinion all over the world as being people of no personal value. Muslim writers, of course, are unanimous in expounding the view that this is all attributable to the plots, oppression and prejudice of non-Muslim nations. How absurd this proposition seems when we consider that the arrangement of the entire world is in the hands of God Himself; He has never abdicated His control in favour of any particular community. Therefore, holding others responsible for the woes of Muslims is a baseless calumny.

The present state of Muslims has come about, not because of national or international conspiracies, but because they are subject to the laws of their Divine Maker like everyone else. The following verse of the Quran describes how God deals with nations, depending upon whether they are useful or useless to society at large.

The giver group will attain stability in this world, whether in a national or international setting.

He sends down water from the sky that fills riverbeds to overflowing, each according to its measure. The torrent carries along swelling foam, akin to what rises from smelted ore from which man makes ornaments and tools. God thus depicts truth and falsehood. The scum is cast away, but whatever is of use to man remains behind. (13: 17)

Another analogy is that of the purification of ores by heating them, so that whatever is impure first flows away, leaving behind a useful metallic residue.

A useless, or unprofitable group is like the scum from ore or the foam from water which has to be discarded, while the useful, giver group may be likened to the pure water, or pure metal which is left after the impurities have been washed away. It is the latter group which will attain stability in this world and give value, whether in a national or international setting.

The Muslims of today who have lost their usefulness have become so much like foam under the same law of God which governs all nations of the world. However it is never too late to change. They can be useful to the society by contributing positively in the constructive activities of the world. □

A SURE PATH TO SUCCESS

No Substitute for Hard work

WHEN the Indian freedom fighter, Raja Mahendra Pratap, (1886-1979) met Vladimir Lenin in Moscow in 1919, the first thing that the leader of the Russian Socialist Revolution said to his Indian guest was: "In which language should I speak: English, German, French or Russian?" Lenin had learnt all these languages. On this occasion, it was decided that the conversation should be conducted in English.

How had Lenin become so well-acquainted with so many languages? The answer is: by following the example of his elders and then building upon it with sheer hard work. Lenin's father died when Vladimir was only sixteen, and he was nurtured for the most part by his mother, Maria Alexandrovna. Her household, writes Lenin's biographer David Shub, "was run along Spartan lines and the children were largely self-educated. Maria Alexandrovna taught herself German, French, English and the piano."

The manner in which Lenin followed in the footsteps of his mother is illustrated by his learning of the English language. While banished to Siberia by the Czarist regime (1897-1900), Lenin and his wife, Krupskaya, spent mornings translating Sidney and Beatrice Webb's Theory and Practice of Trade Unionism. Not only did they translate the book from English into their native Russian, but Lenin also used to translate it back into English, without referring to the original text. In a letter to his sister Anna, he wrote: "I have concluded from my experience that this is the most rational method of learning a language."

When Lenin and Krupskaya went to England in April 1902, they found that though they had translated Sidney and Beatrice Webb, "their knowledge of English bore only a remote resemblance to the native product. With his usual zest, Lenin set to work learning the language. He went wherever he could hear English spoken, to pubs, to Hyde Park, to all sorts of meetings. Crowding up front, he listened carefully to every word and watched the lip movements of the speakers. In addition, he hired two English teachers whom he taught Russian in exchange for English lessons. With these efforts his English soon became fairly

The sure way to success lies in taking up the best traditions of the past, then building upon them for the future with sheer hard work of our own.

proficient, if not fluent." (*Lenin: A Biography*, by David Shub, Pelican Books, p. 70).

The method that Lenin adopted in learning English shows us the way to success in life. While taking up the best traditions of the past, we are to build upon them for the future with sheer hard work of our own. This method may require years of toil, and temporary disappointment, but it is sure to be successful in the end. □



Dr. Saniyasnain Khan Listed in The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims



Dr. Saniyasnain has been a prolific writer of children's books with more than 100 titles to his name. He established Goodword Books in 1999 which has published over 1000 titles. His books focus on Islamic themes and have been translated into many languages. He was awarded Sharjah Children's Book Award in 2013 for his book 'The Story of Khadija'. A trustee of the Centre for Peace and Spirituality (CPS International), he is a regular contributor of articles in various newspapers and magazines. He also hosts a weekly TV programme. This year, he has been included in The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims, 2019, Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Jordan. This book is published annually since 2009 and ranks most influential Muslims in the world.

Notably, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, founder of CPS International and Editor-in-chief of Spirit of Islam monthly has been a regular inclusion for more than 5 years in this publication.

INDIAN MUSLIMS AT THE CROSSROADS

Towards a Bright Future

KEEPING the future in your mind and forgetting the past: This is the secret of progress in this world. Every individual and a group suffers from untoward experiences here. These events often lead to a point of no return. Those who choose to remember them, remain frozen; and those who forget these negative experiences and find ways to start their life all over again are the ones who succeed. This principle of forgetting is a universal principle. There is no exception in it either for an individual or a group.

Both the Muslims and the Hindus of India are now facing this test. Both these communities must now forget whatever happened in the past and endeavour their utmost to make their future bright. This is the sole option for them that will lead to accomplishment and development. They do not have another option which is even remotely possible.

Indian Hindus must forget the Partition, and Indian Muslims must forget Babri Mosque. Both of them are carrying the burden of the past. For the Hindus, a symbolic title for the burden they carry is 'Partition', and for the Muslims, 'Babri Mosque' is the symbolic title that can be given to their burden. If both these communities wish to build for themselves a bright and developed future, they first need to throw out from their minds bad memories of the past, and start thinking about future. The progress of both communities will remain stalled if they fail to do so. This burden of the past, in the long run, will spell doom for the country.

A section of the Hindu community holds the Muslims responsible for the Partition of the country. Precisely for this reason, they still continue to entertain grudge against the Muslims which finds expression through various unpleasant events. While holding the Muslims responsible for the Partition, Hindu brothers have now no option other than treating the Partition as a thing of the past. They should forget who was responsible for the division of the country, and who demanded it. The issue is no more related with Partition. In fact, it is more about the destruction the country is suffering in paying the price of Partition.

Partition was an issue for the Muslims till 1947, but now it is posing as a problem for the Hindus as well. It is because the memory of it is not allowing them to develop a moderate and tolerant viewpoint. So long as a moderate viewpoint eludes them, they cannot play their part satisfactorily in the progress of the country.

Partition, in itself, is not such a dire event that should act as an insurmountable obstacle in the road to mutual progress. Many events from history testify to this fact, the more recent being that of Germany. In 1948, Germany was divided into two countries, but this division could not stop West Germany to attain to progress and prosperity.

The German economy was left in tatters in the aftermath of World War II. It was further weakened by dividing the country into East Germany and West Germany. The Allied High Commission, in 1949, implemented the command that West Germany could not keep National Police. They were permitted to keep the police department of the elementary Municipality level, etc.

The Partition and the weakened economy did not prove to be obstacles for the growth of Germany. It became *numero uno* European country by the sweat of its own efforts and struggles.

If the Hindu and Muslim communities wish to build for themselves a bright and developed future, they first need to throw out from their minds the bad memories of the past, and start thinking about future.

How did Germany achieve such glory? Some attribute this stupendous success to the fact that it started its journey way later than other European countries. It is stated that those who start their journey later, cover their distance faster, because they can avail the latest technology from their predecessors.

Late starters can grow faster because they can borrow advanced technology from the early starters. (EB 6/214)

This justification is not correct. India is among the late starters, but it has failed to achieve a worthwhile progress. The basic reason behind

the fast progress of West Germany lies in the fact that it ignored the loss it incurred in WWII and the Partition of the country which followed soon after. By forgetting the past, it utilized all its capacities to build a bright future.

Unfortunately, a considerable number of Hindus, especially from the North India, could not forget the Partition of 1947. As a result, the North India, from which the majority of Indian leadership comes, remained embroiled in negative activities. It could not devote itself wholeheartedly to the building of a new future.

This is now the last opportunity for our compatriots to acknowledge this fact. They should unentangle themselves from the memory of the Partition and employ themselves in the positive development of a new

India. That day is not far when our country begins its journey towards progress in leaps and bounds, and thereby achieve a respectful place on the global map which it truly deserves.

As for Indian Muslims, they lagged far behind the other communities in the ladder of progress. After the demolition of Babri Mosque on 6 December, 1992, they are more in despair than ever. They feel that they do not have opportunities of progress in this country.

This thinking is totally unwarranted. The principles in this matter is that no external event decides the decline or fall of a nation. The decisive factor in the rise and fall of a nation is its own internal capacity and energy, and not external events. Nations always move ahead with the power of their internal determination. If fortitude and determination are present, no external upheaval can cause hindrance in the journey of a nation's progress.

As for the mosques, there are many instances in the Muslim history where mosques became the target of the public frenzy. In AD 692, the army sent by Hajjaj bin Yusuf bombarded the *Kabah* using a catapult. It is mentioned in the books of history:

Makkah was besieged, the *haram* bombarded with missiles, and the *Kaba* set on fire, the Sacred Black Stone was split in three pieces. (1/1047)

Notwithstanding these, the history of Islam did not halt. Those who had bombarded the Sacred Mosque, *Kabah*, were the ones who built it again. The Tartars ransacked the Muslim world in 1258, and demolished hundreds of mosques from Samarkand to Aleppo. Even this calamity did not put a stop to the progress of Islamic history. Again, the Tartars themselves built all these mosques. Even in India, thousands of mosques were razed in Haryana, Punjab, and in Rajasthan in 1947. Not one of these events put a stop to the wheels of Islamic history. Why would then one think that the demolition of Babri Mosque would bring the history of Islam to an end.

The crucial thing for the Muslims is not the fact that Babri Mosque was demolished on 6, December, 1992, but the fact that still, there are more than 300,000 mosques in India. Religious seminaries in numbers exceeding the mosques are spread everywhere. Islamic institutes and

Nations always move ahead with the power of their internal determination. If fortitude and determination are present, no external upheaval can cause hindrance in the journey of a nation's progress.

religious movements abound in thousands. Apart from these, even after the event of 6 December, Muslims still have equal opportunities for progress and development.

Muslims have no reason for despair and frustration in such a bright situation. They should now initiate the act of their upliftment with a new resolve. They would soon see that they have gained a lot more after 6 December than they had lost on 6 December. This is the message from the past, and the call of the future as well.

Looking at the positive side of the Babri mosque verdict is the sign of maturity and understanding.

The second important thing in this regard is to look at the results. If accepting this verdict wholeheartedly helps break down the wall that has been separating the two communities for almost a hundred years, one should readily accept it.

The verdict of the Indian Supreme Court about the Babri Mosque issue was announced in November, 2019. This verdict is in the interest of the country. No one should now go about finding any negative aspect of this verdict. Instead, Muslims should look only at the bright picture.

‘Who listen to what is said and follow what is best in it. These are the ones God has guided; these are the people endowed with understanding.’ (38: 18)

In the light of the above Quranic verse, looking at the positive side of the verdict is the sign of maturity and understanding. The second important thing in this regard is to look at the results. If accepting this verdict wholeheartedly helps break down the wall that has been separating the two communities for almost a hundred years, one should readily accept it. □



For every closed door there is always another which is open—but only to those who have the eyes to see it and the courage to march through it.

INTELLECTUAL REBIRTH

A Sure Sign of Maturity

“When I put My servant to the test, and he remains patient, never uttering a word of complaint to anyone he meets, I free him from My clutches and put new flesh and blood in him. He then sets about his work with renewed vigour.”

IN the above *Hadith* the Prophet Muhammad has set down the words of Almighty God. A man's first birth is that which brings him into this world when he is born of his mother. But there is a 'rebirth', a birth in a man's lifetime, which is brought about by the man himself. Anyone who has not experienced their new birth is just an ordinary human being, subject to everyday influences of family and environment, as he goes about his work. On the other hand, one who has been born anew is an ever-progressing, ever-developing human being. The revolution which has taken place within him has made a new man of him.

How is it that a new man of this nature comes into existence? It is in response to the situations which confront a man in life that such an event takes place. In the normal course of existence, one perforce comes face to face with all sorts of adverse circumstances. There are two ways of reacting to them. Either one may fall to complaining and become embittered, or one may display courage and patience at all times, retaining one's mental and emotional poise. In the first case, the habitual complainer becomes such a prey to his own negative sentiments, that he can never proceed beyond this point on the journey of life. He is like the gramophone needle, stuck at one place on the record, doomed forever to remain in the same repetitive groove.

However, the man who remains patient and uncomplaining in the face of adversity, does not allow himself to become a prey to hatred or jealousy, and does not, therefore, lose his peace of mind. He may be besieged on all sides by cruelty and oppression, but this does not make him show anger or even exasperation. For such an individual, unfavourable circumstances are what cast him in a new mould, from which he emerges as a being of a finer temper and of a higher moral calibre. It is by virtue of his patience in the face of adversity that he develops into a fully mature human being. □

It is by virtue of one's patience in the face of adversity that one develops into a fully mature human being.

SIMPLE LIVING BRINGS POSITIVE RESULTS

Life Well-Lived

HE who believes in simple living creates problems neither for himself nor for others, and one who engages in high thinking becomes a truly selfless person. Spirituality, the sublime character of men and women, has two facets: the internal and the external. The internal facet is positive thinking. The external facet is living in peace. Spirituality is in no way a kind of ecstasy, as is often believed. Indeed, it is a non-material culture, which means giving more importance to values which are immaterial rather than material. In essence, it promotes the philosophy of simple living and high thinking — the moral mainstay of humanity

Material Clashes

The majority of anti-human activities in society result from the clash between people over material interest. But if, by obeying one's spiritual proclivities, one can go beyond such interests, the result is entirely positive. One who does so will become a healthy member of society, and a society which is largely composed of such members is bound to emerge as a peaceful society.

Positive men and women are like spiritual gardeners, who, in their conduct towards others, turn society into a spiritual garden.

Spirituality is a culture of nature, a demonstration of which is given to us by nature in a variety of ways. Let us take the example of a rose plant.

The rose plant is a combination of two quite opposite elements: flowers and thorns. Both flowers and thorns live together on the stem of a rose plant, but there is no clash between the two. It is this feature that has made the rose plant a very beautiful and thought-provoking thing to behold, in that it is symbolic of how we should live in society without there

being any friction between disparate elements. There is spirituality of a purely internal nature and then there is spirituality which reaches out to others. Spirituality of the internal kind makes one a good human being, while 'applied' spirituality ensures harmonious interaction between individuals, both men and women, of which society is made of. If society is a tree, the spiritual person is its flower.

Spirituality makes the individual a true human being. But this does not suffice. A person's spirituality must impinge on his environment. His elevated spiritual values must become evident in his dealings with others, and he must take the course of peaceful adjustment when a clash is imminent. At all events, he must clearly demonstrate his capacity to turn negative experiences into positive ones. Positive men and women are like spiritual gardeners, who, in their conduct towards others, turn society into a spiritual garden. 'Applied' spirituality means bringing into play a multiplicity of spiritual values. This is beneficial to both the spiritual person and his neighbour. It makes him a happy individual and ensures that his environs will remain free of societal problems.

Mind Science

Spirituality is a science, a science of the mind. It is the greatest source of positive thinking, positive taste, positive habits and positive behaviour. A positive person is a blessing for his home, for society and for his nation. In secular terms, spirituality is positive thinking and in religious terms, it is divine discipline. □



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PATIENCE AND PIETY

Believers' Attitude

OF all the innumerable people who inhabit this world besides ourselves, most of them are trying to achieve some kind of success, and striving to outdo their fellowmen. To attain to these ends, they will proceed as they please, for they have been given complete freedom of action by their Creator. There is, therefore a never-ending scramble for the good things of life, a constant jockeying for position, and an all-too-frequent lack of scruple in elbowing contenders out of the way. We have to face this fact of life, that in this ongoing rough and tumble, the weakest are those who will fall by the wayside.

The believers should be more concerned with their own inner state than they are with the external conditions in which they find themselves, and that, above all, they should adhere to the guidance they have received from God, for this will lead them along the paths of patience and piety.

There is no way of averting the hurts and losses of our competitive existence, for that is simply the way that God has made the world. This, it should be noted, is not a feature peculiar to parts of the world where Muslims and people of other faiths live cheek by jowl. It is characteristic of human existence all over the world, and is certainly to be found in all Muslim communities.

The world being as it is, problems cannot be solved by coming into conflict with everyone whose interests clash with our own. There is only one effective approach, and that is to adopt the policy of avoidance favoured by the Quran. Only by sidestepping those who try to obstruct our progress in life can we continue on our journey with any success. But in order to pursue such a course, the virtue of patience must be sedulously cultivated. To

adopt a policy of restraint and simply remove oneself from the path of someone who is bent on being obstructive does require a high degree of forbearance.

But then, the alternative—attaining one's objectives in an aggressive, confrontational way—means being anti-social and creating disharmony on a variety of fronts, all of which is inconsistent with the ideals of social order.

Believers are fortunate in having the assurances of the Quran that so long as they are guided by the tenets of their faith, they will not be harmed in any way by the malice or misdeeds of their opponents.

If you persevere and fear God, their designs will never harm you in the least: God encompasses all that they do. (3:120).

This means the believers should be more concerned with their own inner state than they are with the external conditions in which they find themselves, and that, above all, they should adhere to the guidance they have received from God, for this will lead them along the paths of patience and piety. The nurturing of these qualities will build up a protective barrier against plotting and conspiracies. It will, indeed, provide them with an impenetrable defence.

But, why is it that patience is such a rare quality in human beings? It is because it entails the suppression of one's feelings when provoked and the suffering of losses and setbacks without protest—neither of which is an easy thing to do. It is only those who can rise above the petty vengefulness engendered by such situations who will be successful in developing this virtue. The first step towards its attainment is the piety so strongly advocated by the Quran; it means, in effect, having an eternal fear of God in one's heart.

The truly pious person ceases to live on purely human level; he ascends to a divine level where, above all else, he cherishes the will of God, and where all of his actions are aimed at consolidating the blessings promised to him by his Maker. Externally, he may appear to be living in this world, but, in fact, he is living on an exalted plane where his inner senses are in tune with the everlasting world of God. □



PRICE OF WORLDLY SEATS

Grossly Exorbitant

MR. SURENDRANATH DWIVEDI has mentioned this interesting reaction of the well-known Indian thinker, Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan (1902-1979) in his book *"Quest for Socialism."*

Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan had turned down the proposal of his candidature for presidentship of India in 1967 because he did not consider it 'a very honourable situation to read speeches prepared by somebody else'.

Renunciation of freedom—mental, moral, emotional and physical is too great a price to pay for anything purely material.

"Please keep me off this. I am not interested even in the highest office. Somebody else would prepare my speech and I would have to deliver it as my own or my government's. I do not consider this a very honourable situation. So please excuse me," he said to his socialist colleague, Mr. Surendranath Dwivedi. No doubt he could not bear to contemplate such limitations of his mental and moral freedom.

Similar was the reaction of the former Vice President of India, Mr. Hidayatullah. After having resigned from vice-presidentship, he remarked:

"I am feeling as free as a bird."

High positions of power have always been objects of envy for the people. However, these coveted seats lose their charm as soon as they come within our grasp. The price we pay for them is our freedom—mental, moral, emotional and physical—and surely renunciation of such freedom is too great a price to pay for anything so purely material. □



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SIMPLIFYING ONE'S DIFFICULTIES

Prophetic Method

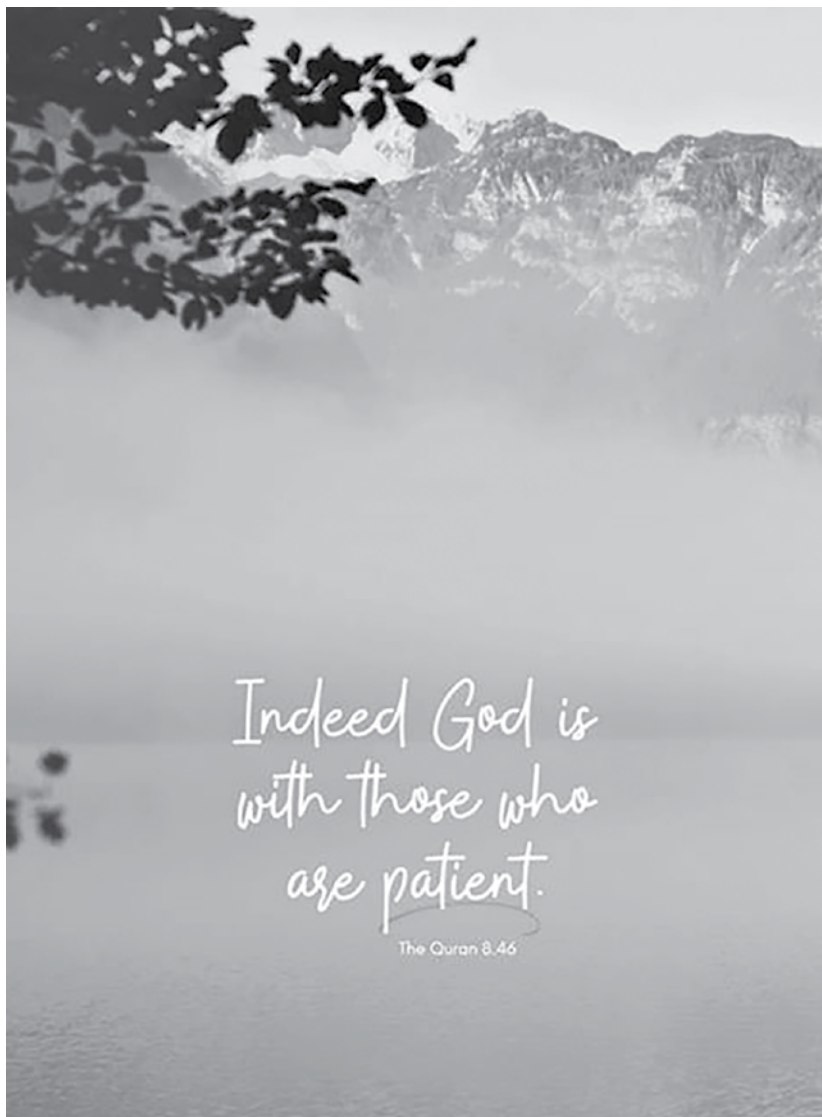
THE concept presented by Islam of peaceful living is based on the idea that, in this world, adversity is always accompanied by some positive, simplifying factor. That is to say that disadvantages will always be accompanied by advantages. The common man is nevertheless of the view that whenever any difficulty presents itself, the only solution is to fight. And it is this mentality which breeds violence. If, however, he could be convinced that whenever the path to success seemed barred to him, there would always be something inherent in the situation to ease his difficulties, his whole manner of thinking would change.

This is not a concept which is immediately acceptable, the main reason being that most people have never formed the habit of identifying the positive factors in a seemingly negative situation. But once this concept has taken root in a man's mind, he will no longer clash, head-on, with anything unfavourable that comes in his way. He will, on the contrary, direct his efforts towards seeking whatever advantages lie in store for him. Then, only after securing these advantages will he start his struggle anew. In this way, on the ideological plane, this concept strikes at the very roots of violence. In addition to this conceptual approach, Islam offers a new methodology based on non-violence rather than on violence.

The first principle of the non-violent method is to show willingness to accept what is possible. A fine, practical example of this principle was personally demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad at the outset of his missionary career in Makkah. At that time, there were many evils prevailing in the society. Had the Prophet Muhammad directly launched a struggle against these evils, he would at once have set off a violent confrontation in Makkah, and the armed conflict would have overshadowed his message of peace.

The Prophet had, at that juncture, formulated an important principle of peace. Presenting it to the world, he put it into practice himself. The principle he followed was to make one's starting point what was possible. That is to say, confine one's activity to the field in which opportunities are available under the prevailing system. The rest had to be left for the future.

This was the principle which he followed for thirteen years while working in Makkah. Any attempt to bring about a change in the system in Makkah would only have resulted in clash and confrontation. He, therefore, set before himself the target of bringing about a change in the individual, and continued to work on those same lines for the whole of the Makkan period. □

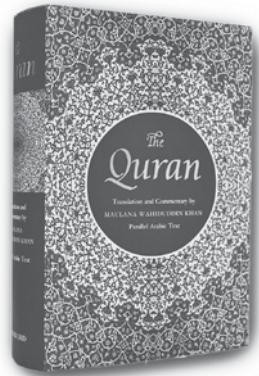


THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures

The Quran is the book of God. It has been preserved in its entirety since its revelation to the Prophet of Islam between AD 610 and 632. It is a book that brings glad tidings to humankind, along with divine admonition, and stresses the importance of man's discovery of the Truth on a spiritual and intellectual level.

Translated from Arabic and commentary by
Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



Who created the heavens and the earth and sends down water for you from the sky, by which We make luxuriant gardens grow—you could never make such trees grow in them—is it another deity besides God? No indeed, but they are a people who equate others with Him.

Who is it that made the earth a stable place to live in? Who made rivers flow through it? Who set mountains upon it and placed a barrier between the two seas? Is there another deity besides God? Indeed, most of them have no knowledge. (27: 60-61)

Expressed as a chain of cause and effect, the theories propounded by atheists or agnostics, remain woefully inadequate to explain the creation of the unimaginably vast universe.

Be it the creation of the innumerable heavenly bodies that float in boundless space, or the elaborate arrangements that make the earth habitable—all these and many other such phenomena are too great and too wonderful to have been wrought by any deity or occasioned by any blind physical law.

The fact is that any explanation of the universe on bases other than God amounts to giving a false explanation of reality. This is merely a fabrication and not a genuine explanation.

Who responds to the oppressed when he calls out to Him, and relieves his suffering and who will make you inheritors of the earth? Then, is there a god besides God? How little you pay heed! Who guides you in the darkness of the land and sea? Who sends the breezes as heralds of His mercy? Then, is there a deity besides God? Exalted is God above what they associate with Him. Who originates creation, then

regenerates it, and who gives you sustenance from heaven and earth? Then, is there a deity besides God?' Say, 'Bring forward your proofs, if you are telling the truth.' (27: 62-64)

The needs of man are fulfilled as a result of the perfect coordination between all the factors in the universe. We must ask who, other than Almighty God, can assemble all the favourable factors on such a large scale?

Similarly, the displacement of a nation or race and another nation taking its place, the sailing of a ship, and in the modern age the flying of an aeroplane in darkness as well as in daylight by taking advantage of technological advances, the rising of water vapour from the sea and its subsequent descent in the shape of rain. The creation of things out of nothing and their resurrection, the provision of all kinds for man on a large scale—all these result solely from the instrumentality of Almighty God.

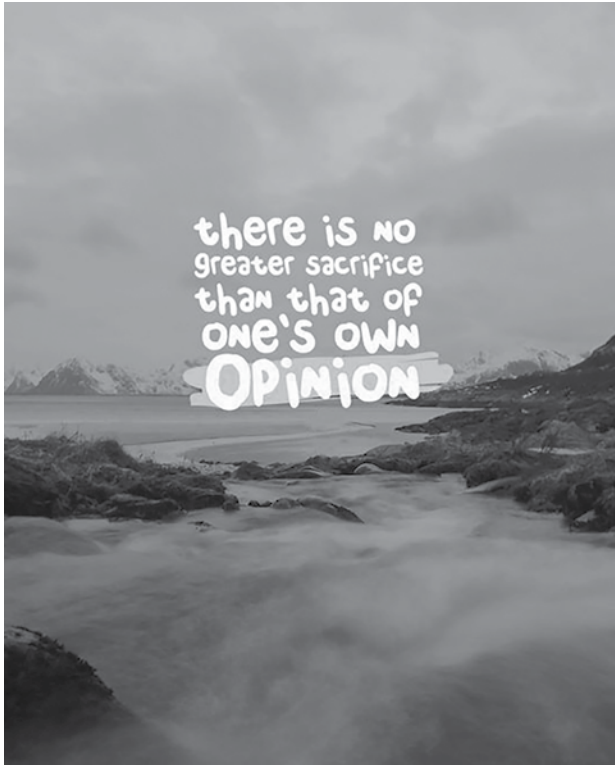
This is true of all of the world's events. Here, to cause a single event to take place, it is necessary to activate innumerable factors, and this can be done only by that Being who has control of the whole universe. In this context, how foolish it is to make anybody other than God the centre of adoration and worship!

Say, 'No one in the heavens and the earth has knowledge of the unseen except God.' They do not know when they will be raised up again. Indeed, their knowledge of the life to come stops short of the truth: they are [often] in doubt as to its reality: in fact, they are blind to it. Those who deny the truth say, 'When we have turned to dust like our fathers, shall we be brought back to life again? We and our fathers were promised this before; these are but old stories.' Say, 'Roam across the earth and observe what was the end of the sinful ones.' (27: 65-69)

The addressees of the prophets were not absolute and total deniers of the life Hereafter, but they denied that particular concept of the Hereafter, which was presented by the prophets. People were under the impression that the issue of the Hereafter was meant not for them but for others to ponder over. The prophets told them that the Hereafter was as serious a problem for them as it was for others. Yet they clung to the belief that their attachment to some saints or holy persons would redeem them in the Hereafter. The prophets told them, however, that in the Hereafter only God's grace and not attachment to any saint or holy person would be of any avail.

That is why they were mentally confused about the Hereafter. Hot-headed individuals would, of course, articulate their denial of the Hereafter. However, the common people's position was that they did not deny the Hereafter altogether. But, since acceptance of the concept of the Hereafter resulted in the curtailment of their various liberties, their selfish side was not prepared to accept it. So, in reply, they used to talk as if they doubted it. Due to this mentality, they never gave serious consideration to the arguments in favour of the Hereafter. They remained blind and deaf to them.

The fact is that the powers required to decide the fate of nations or races are vested solely in the All-Knowing God. In the present world, He enforces His decisions partially, but in the Hereafter, He will enforce His decisions fully in respect of all nations. □



ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

The remedy for ignorance is asking questions. (Prophet Muhammad).

The spirit of enquiry is the hallmark of an open society and the above saying of the Prophet aptly illustrates this principle. A culture of curiosity and open-mindedness will foster development in any society by motivating its members to learn enthusiastically and enrich their knowledge. This is because awareness of one's ignorance is half of knowledge, as it becomes a stepping-stone to seeking and finding answers. A questioning mind is like a flowing river that is replenished with fresh thoughts and ideas and continues on its journey.

What is the real message of the Quran, the Bible and the Torah?

The common message of these three religious scriptures is monotheism, or the concept of unity of God. There is a verse in the Quran that reads:

The believers, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabeans, all those who believe in God and the Last Day and do good deeds, will be rewarded by their Lord; they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. (2: 62)

Do Muslims love Jesus?

In Islam, the Prophet Jesus and the Prophet Muhammad have an equal position in terms of respect. Both were sent as a mercy to humankind, to guide them to the right path and to spirituality. The Quran says:

Say, "We believe in God and in what has been sent down to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes. We believe in what has been given to Moses, Jesus and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them. It is to Him that we have surrendered ourselves." (3: 84).

As a Muslim, what is your view on Hinduism?

Every religion has special characteristics. Hinduism has a unique tradition of accepting plurality of truth without seeking to enforce change of belief system. The composite nature of the Indian society today is not by accident. It is due directly to the monistic way of thinking held by the majority of the Indian population. India believes in plurality, or in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, 'the manyness of reality'.

According to this religious philosophy, the Hindus believe that everything in the cosmos is an *ansh*, or part of divinity. They believe in the concept of an indwelling god, that is, every human being has a content of divinity. Due to this concept, the Hindu mind accords the position of divinity to every man and woman. This is the genesis of the culture of tolerance in India. Hinduism does not advocate change of faith. It believes in the principle of mutual acceptance. Thus, Hindus believe they are on the true path and so are others.

What can Muslims learn from people of other faiths?

Life is all about mutual learning. All of us should interact with and learn from one another. Learning is a process. It is not restricted only to some specific issues. This is the age of knowledge explosion and learning. One should imbibe the spirit of learning and must learn from one and all. By virtue of being different, each person has experiences to share and learning to offer.

Learning is to be had from everyone. It is not a question of Muslim or non-Muslim. Just as two stones create sparks when rubbed against each other, similarly mutual learning causes brainstorming and leads to emergence of new ideas.

Does Islam allow Muslims to wish people of other faiths on their festivals?

Absolutely! Opportunities for engaging in interaction should never be lost. Greeting others is a part of social ethics, and not a part of belief system. One must strive to live peacefully and humbly in society. A society is a unit of a nation, which is diverse yet interconnected. When the members of a society acknowledge their diversity despite having different beliefs, they nurture a healthy atmosphere of open interaction, mutual learning and peaceful coexistence. □



The way to prosper is to ignore the matters that divide one from others and to concentrate on cultivating areas of mutual concern.

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