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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

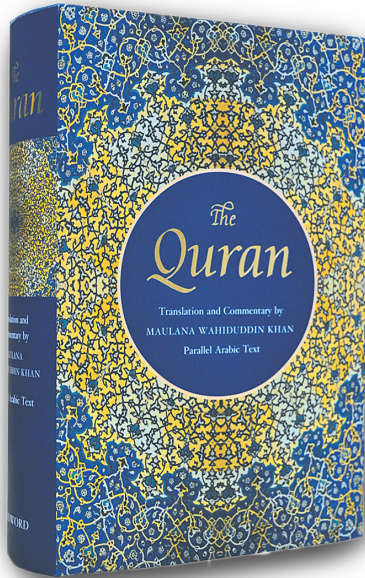


Win the mind and you will be able to win the battle.

The Quran

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY
MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN
PARALLEL ARABIC TEXT

This commentary on the Quran is a concise, easy-to-read guide that enables today's readers to understand the deeper meanings of the Quran and to reflect upon its relevance in the present world. It focuses on the main themes of the Quran, such as God-realization, enlightenment, closeness to God, remembrance, prayer, peace and spirituality. It lays stress on the fact that through reflection, deep thinking and contemplation, divine lessons can be learnt from the signs of God scattered across the world.



This commentary thus explains the meaning of the Quran in such a way as to give readers a clearer understanding of the message of the Quran and helps them in finding their own way of making it relevant to themselves.

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A translation of the Quran in simple English is also available.

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Spiritual Living

ISSUE 25, JANUARY 2015

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Readers,

Greetings of Peace!

Without the help of God, it would not have been possible to complete another year of publication of our magazine *Spirit of Islam* and start on our third year with this January 2015 issue. Reaching out to others with the message of God about His creation plan has been the mission of the Prophets, and our aim—with this publication—is to follow in their footsteps.

Our magazine aspires to address the individual and the modern mind providing intellectual food for common issues that confront man; issues such as life and death, success and failure, suffering and evil, desire, peace and spirituality, the meaning and purpose of our existence etc. A serious seeker of truth will surely find nourishment through these pages.

Albeit the title of our magazine, the articles are of universal significance and readers will discover unique insights and divine wisdom for life extracted from the scriptures and the teachings of the Prophets.

Promotion of global peace has been the mission of our mentor and Chief Editor, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. Peace is an ideology of life and in 2014 we presented a unique series entitled *The Culture of Peace*. Through the series, *From the Spiritual Tree*, you shared in his personal spiritual discoveries.

Lessons from the Prophets, has been another feature in our magazine and we brought out several articles providing guidance from their lives. We will continue in the same vein through the coming issues.

Circulation of this magazine has been slowly but surely increasing and many libraries have also subscribed. Thank you, dear readers, for your continued support and encouragement. We welcome and appreciate your feedback. If you approve of this magazine and find it beneficial, kindly share it by spreading the good word.

We wish you all happiness in the year 2015, and present to you the *Road to Happiness* through Maulana's Desk in the following pages.

Aijaz Ahmed

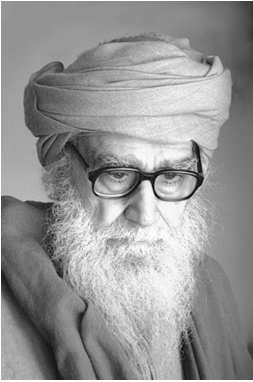
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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 third highest civilian honour in India, and the Demiurgus Peace International Award. He has been called 'Islam's spiritual ambassador to the world' and is recognised 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.

ROAD TO HAPPINESS

IF you seek to know what is the most common issue faced by people all over the world, you will certainly reach the conclusion that it is 'living in unhappiness'. Rich and poor, powerful and powerless, popular and unpopular, almost all people are living in a state of unhappiness. In terms of degree, there may be a difference, but in reality, everyone's case is one and the same. Now the question is, what is the reason behind this universal unhappiness?

The reason is very simple. Man is born with an 'explanation-seeking' nature, but is compelled to live in a world that appears unexplained to him. It is this contradiction that creates the problem. Experience shows that everyone tries to overcome this contradiction one way or another, but fail to arrive at the required result; that is, to explain the world around them in a satisfactory manner. During my youth, I too was involved in this quest. After years of long pursuit, I finally discovered the answer in a verse of the Quran. This Quranic verse reads:

Surely, in the remembrance of God,
hearts can find comfort.

THE QURAN 13: 28

Here, remembrance of God does not mean a repetitive recitation of the word God. It is in a profound sense the constant realisation and acknowledgement of God. It means that, one who discovers God and His scheme of things regarding creation, will consequently

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

find that trail which, if he follows, can lead him to discover the secret of real solace.

According to my experience, people seek the answer to their question within the present world, whereas according to the divine plan the world Hereafter has to be taken into consideration. Only then will you discover the fact that will remove all tension and give you real happiness. The fact is that God Almighty created man as an eternal being and divided his lifespan into two parts: the pre-death period and the post-death period. The pre-death period is the travelling period and the post-death period is when you reach the destination. Death is not an end to this journey. Death only serves as a gateway to the next world.

The next world is the world of Paradise. Paradise is the perfect version of the present imperfect world. It is equipped with all those features that are required for enjoying real and lasting happiness. If you accept this explanation of human life, death becomes a positive event for you. Life becomes a continuous journey, from the imperfect world to the perfect world; from the present temporary world to eternal Paradise. Now the question is, how can we find entry into Paradise? The Quran gives the answer in these words: "He will abide forever in the Gardens of eternity, through which rivers flow. That is the recompense for those who purify themselves." (THE QURAN 20: 76)

Self-purification is the key word in this regard. According to this Quranic verse only purified souls will find entry into Paradise. A purified soul means an unpolluted soul. According to a *Hadith*, every person was born with a divine nature. So, the one who pollutes his original nature will be deprived from entering Paradise, and the one who preserves his soul in its original form will find entry into Paradise. He will be gifted Paradise as an appreciation of his good conduct. This fact is mentioned in the Quran in these words: "He who purifies it will indeed be successful, and he who pollutes it is sure to fail." (THE QURAN 91: 9-10)

If you are travelling by train to a well-known destination, then every station will give you a dose of solace knowing that with every moment you are coming closer to your goal. So is the case of life, if you are on the right path, as described by the Creator, you will only be happy that every day and night you are coming closer to your goal which is none other than eternal Paradise. This thought will give you a tension-free mind and true happiness. □

Maulana Wahiddudin Khan
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EXPLAINING THE UNIVERSE IN RATIONAL TERMS

The Human World And The Material World

IT is said that the entire debate over belief and disbelief boils down to one question: Does logic prevail? Those who have chosen disbelief ask if there were a God, why do we see a major contradiction in the world. That is, from our observations of the universe, we clearly come to the conclusion that there is grand design in the world of nature. However, the human world presents quite a different picture. Here, we witness misery, sorrow, suffering and all kinds of evil.

According to these people this contradiction between the two worlds — the material world and the human world — shows that our world is a bundle of randomness. Although, in a partial sense there seems to be design in the world, but when we look at the picture in totality, the design disappears. This scenario dispels the argument from design, which states that if there is design, there ought to be a designer.

The Creator's scheme for the human world involves complete freedom for man.

The explanation of this contradiction lies in drawing a comparison. When we compare the two worlds, we discover that there is a fundamental difference between the two. The human world is characterized by total freedom without any restrictions. Man is free to choose either *ahimsa* (non-violence) or violence and bloodshed. He can utilize nuclear energy for constructive purposes or use it to develop nuclear weapons. This kind of freedom is bound to create chaos and conflict. It has the potential of destroying all systems.

On the other hand, the case of the material world is different. In spite of its mind-boggling vastness and countless components, we find complete determinism in the material world. From the micro-world to the macro-world the whole universe is functioning under tight discipline, or natural laws. As a result, the material world has a highly predictable character. It is because of this predictability that we have been able to develop science and technology with precision.

Lack of determinism in the human world is the reason why social

sciences could not become an exact science like the physical sciences. For example, while the solar system has only one definition, political science has a dozen different definitions.

This difference between the two worlds makes us believe that the plan of the Creator regarding the two worlds is different. The Creator has kept determinism in the material world. On the contrary, the Creator's scheme for the human world involves complete freedom for man. There is deep wisdom behind this difference. If we observe the physical world, we realize that there is no phenomenon of intellectual development in it. In other words, it has remained the same for millions of years. But, in the human world there are constant challenges, and it is this kind of challenging environment that leads to progress and development. Without experiencing challenges there can be no creative thinking or intellectual development. When we observe the material world we find order in it. In contrast, in the human world we can seemingly observe disorder. But, this 'disorder' is not a negative phenomenon, rather it is a positive phenomenon. The positive term for this disorder in the human world is challenge.

**Without experiencing challenges there can be no
creative thinking or intellectual development.**

Due to this difference, we have to apply two separate yardsticks to judge these worlds. The material world has to be judged by the yardstick of determinism, while the human world should be judged by the yardstick of freedom of choice. Because of its deterministic nature, the material world could be utilized for building technology. Without this predictability we would not have been able to use the material world for industrial development. On the other hand, in the human world because of total freedom there are several problems or challenges, and it is in meeting these challenges that we develop and advance. However, this total freedom also gives rise to evil.

The problem of evil is not a phenomenon of the material world. It is exclusively a phenomenon of the human world. This so-called evil is a necessary price that we have to pay for all those developments which have culminated into what we refer to with pride as civilization. □



ANALYZING PRESENT-DAY MUSLIM MILITANCY

An Un-Islamic Political Ideology

ON November 2, 2014, a deadly suicide bomb blast took place at the Wagah border in Pakistan. The attack left more than 60 dead and about 200 injured. Why should there be news of this kind from Muslim countries? Obviously, the purpose of this violence is to achieve some goal. But, whatever may be the goal, the violent method has become quite irrelevant in present times. The violent method was relevant in previous centuries when people lived in a tribal culture. But now we are living in the age of freedom and science. Now, the peaceful approach is far more effective than violence. But, it seems that Muslims are still beset by outdated tribal obsessions and are totally unaware of the fact that times have changed and that peaceful methods have replaced violent methods.

**The peaceful approach is far more effective
than violence.**

It is a fact that no religion, including Islam, advocates terrorism or militancy. Islam is a religion of peace. All the teachings of the Quran are based on peace, either directly or indirectly. For example, there is a very relevant verse in the Quran that tells us that the peaceful way is the best one (THE QURAN 4: 128). Moreover, Islamic teachings are very clear with regard to the sanctity of life. Another Quranic verse says:

Whoever killed a human being—except as a punishment
for murder or for spreading *fasad* (disorder) in the land
shall be regarded as having killed all mankind.

THE QURAN 5: 32

According to this verse, life is the greatest right of every human being. No one is allowed to take away a life, except by way of a judicial verdict that is issued after passing through the due processes of law.

There is the widespread notion that Islam promotes violence. However, this is the result of sheer misunderstanding. The reason is that people fail to differentiate between Muslims and Islam. All these violent activities we hear of today are launched by Muslims. It is a fact that

Muslims are engaged in militancy in the name of Islam. It is the present Muslim community which is to blame and not the religion of Islam. This is an example of the exploitation of Islam and not of the following of Islam.

Under the influence of certain thinkers who have interpreted Islam in political terms, a number of Muslims are obsessed with the politicized ideology of Islam. They have come to believe in the concept of establishing an Islamic system in the world; for this they require political power but when they set out to establish this system, they see that a group is already occupying the political seat. So, they try to overthrow or unseat those who are in possession of political power.

It is this thinking that has led Muslims to perpetrate violence. But this thinking is completely un-Islamic, because Islam enjoins on its followers to follow its teachings at the individual level, rather than foisting them on others by force or violence. The need of the hour is to counter this problem. However, it cannot be countered by means of the gun. Modern Muslim militancy can be eradicated only by providing a counter-ideology. The issue of terrorism is an issue of ideology versus ideology and not one of ideology versus the gun or ideology versus education. The right course is to re-engineer the modern Muslim mind. We should present to them the true ideology of Islam based on peace and tolerance. The real Islamic *jihad* is based on peace and spirituality. Therefore, the problem of Muslim militancy can be solved only by reviving the real Islam and not by taking recourse to any other means.

Muslims are still beset by outdated tribal obsessions.

We have to present Islam as a religion of peace. Changing minds through this method of education will take considerable time, as it is a long-term method. Countering the problem with the gun cannot make those who are engaged in violence abandon their violent ways. Because these people are engaged in violence in the name of Islam, they can be stopped from indulging in such activities only if the true peaceful nature of Islam is shown to them.

The veracity of this method can be judged from the example of Kashmir. After Independence, militancy became widespread among Kashmiri Muslims. We, at Centre for Peace and Spirituality, quietly disseminated peaceful literature among Kashmiris and today militancy in Kashmir

has reduced considerably. The same literary campaign is required in other militancy-affected areas.

Then, there is the question of why religions advocate peace and not violence. The reason is very clear. The objective of religion, including Islam, is to bring about reform in the individual and not in the political system. And, any kind of spiritual or intellectual change can be brought about in an individual only when he is addressed peacefully.

**Modern Muslim militancy can be eradicated
only by providing a counter-ideology.**

Only those who have set political targets for themselves engage in violence, and since religions do not have any political target they do not enjoin violence. Islam has adopted a very practical formula in this matter; that is, idealism at the level of the individual and pragmatism at the level of society.

Conclusion

There is a prophetic saying that Muslims will indulge in un-Islamic activities in their later generations. The Prophet was asked how this would happen. The Prophet answered that Muslims would give Islamic names to non-Islamic activities. What is wrong with the present-day Muslims is that they have given the name of *jihad* to their militancy to seek justification for their militant activities. The need of the hour is to correct this self-styled interpretation of Islam and then everything will certainly fall into place. □



Blessing in Disguise

*When you call a problem a problem, it seems to be an evil;
but when you call it a challenge, it becomes a useful part of life
— something that spurs intellectual development.*

MONOTHEISM: ONENESS OF GOD

The Creator, Sustainer and Cherisher

MONOTHEISM or *Tawheed* is the essence of Islam. *Tawheed* is an Arabic term which means 'oneness' and 'unity.' In Islamic terminology it means the oneness of God. It is a fundamental doctrine of Islam referring to the oneness of God in all its meanings. Thus the declaration that 'there is no God but only one God' is called *Tawheed*. God has no partner (*sharik*), He exists by Himself. Nothing can rival Him as a source of power or love. There is no one worthy of worship other than God. He is not an abstract concept. He is always near us; He cares for us and we owe our existence to Him alone.

Belief in one Creator gives a sense of oneness with all creation.

Islam established a close and direct relationship between the Creator and His creation. In Islam no mediating power of any kind exists between the Creator and His creation. God's absolute unity is reflected in the unity of His creation in which each individual part is in harmonious order with the remainder. There is nothing remotely like Him. The Quran thus enjoins us:

Say: He is God, the one. God the Absolute. He begets not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like Him.

THE QURAN 112: 1-4

Tawheed means that God alone is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe including human beings. He is the only possessor of all powers.

Monotheism is to believe in the fact that all power lies in the hand of one God alone; that He alone deserves to be worshipped. No act in the nature of worship is lawful unless directed towards God. It is God alone who fulfils our needs. It is God alone who is behind the functioning of the entire universe.

Here are further verses from the Quran which state very clearly the concept of God:

Truly your God is but one;
Lord of the heavens and of the earth.

THE QURAN 37: 4-5

This is God your Lord; there is no God but Him,
the Creator of all things; therefore,
worship Him alone.

THE QURAN 6: 102

Your God is one God; there is no deity save Him.
He is the Compassionate, the Merciful.

THE QURAN 2: 163

God: there is no deity save Him, the Living, the Eternal One. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belong whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth. Who can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows all that is before them and all that is behind them. They can grasp only that part of His knowledge which He wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth; and their upholding does not weary Him. He is the Sublime, the Almighty One!

THE QURAN 2: 255

Tawheed has two aspects to it: *tawheed fi az-Zat* and *tawheed fi as-Sifat*, that is, 'oneness of being' and 'oneness of attributes'. This means that God is alone in His Being as well as in His attributes. The attributes of God are called *Al Asmaul Husna*, or 'the excellent names'. The Quran says:

But God's are excellent names, call on Him thereby.

THE QURAN 7: 179

Abu Hurayrah, a companion of the Prophet, has narrated a saying of the Prophet to this effect: "Verily, there are ninety-nine names of God."

Monotheism is to believe in the fact that all power lies in the hand of one God alone.

Islam enjoins the believers to worship one God alone. No other being or object is worthy of being worshipped. No other being should be associated with God. *Shirk* is to worship or hold in reverence anything other than God and it is strictly forbidden in Islam.

The Far-reaching effect of *Tawheed*

By believing in one true God, man is saved from worshipping many false gods. *Tawheed* enables man to establish a direct link between God and man.

Belief in *Tawheed* makes man humble and modest instead of being proud and arrogant. This is because belief in one Great God implies that man is His humble servant and that modesty alone befits him. Believers know that they must submit to God, on whom they depend utterly. Submission to one God results in individual freedom and dignity, for, all human beings become equal and all deserve our respect.

There is only one God and all of us are servants of the same God. Belief in the oneness of God helps individuals to live in unity with others. Belief in one Creator gives a sense of oneness with all creation.

Life and death are entirely in God's hands.

Belief in one God gives the believers confidence; for, they trust in God and believe that nothing can happen unless God wills it. Life and death are entirely in His hands. They remain content because they believe that power, wealth and success come from God alone. He gives them to whom He wants and takes them away from whom he wants. *Tawheed* thus brings about a unique blend of submission to God with human dignity and freedom. □



Not a minute to spare

*When a man has a specific and worthwhile goal before him,
he sets a great value upon his time, but when bereft of a goal,
time hangs heavily upon his hands.*

*It is then that ceremonial gatherings and vain pursuits become
welcome occupations. He makes no real life for himself but
depends upon others for occupation and distraction.*

*In this way, he drifts along, like a ship without
a rudder, to the end of his useless life.*

*On the surface, he has led a full, busy life,
but, on closer inspection, he discovers,
too late, that his achievements are nil,
and that he has frittered away
his precious existence in empty,
meaningless diversions.*

PATIENCE

Personality Development

THE Quran gives a lot of emphasis on patience (*sabr*). According to a Quranic verse: Truly those who persevere patiently will be requited without measure. (THE QURAN 39: 10)

Such a verse is not there in the Quran for any other deed. Only for patience does Quran say that the reward would be countless in measure. What is this reward? This reward is not a mysterious phenomenon. It is what those who exercise patience receive instantly if they have exercised patience in the real sense.

Patience and reward are inseparable parts of each other. In the above verse of the Quran, reward refers to personality development. A developed personality is the much sought-after quality of a human being. In reality, personality development is what separates man from an animal. And the biggest source of personality development is patience.

The biggest source of personality development is patience.

Man is born with unlimited potential. As soon as he is born, this potential starts to unfold on its own. It does not require any additional endeavour for its unfolding. An allegorical reference in the Quran clarifies this further:

Have you not considered how God sets forth a parable of a good word (being) like a good tree? Its root is firm and its branches are in the sky, it yields its fruit each season with its Lord's permission — God makes such comparisons for people in order that they may reflect.

THE QURAN 14: 24-25

A tree is a unique self-growing phenomenon of creation. The entire tree is potentially hidden in a seed and when the seed sprouts, it turns into a tree! So is the case of man. Man is born as a child, which is like a seed. The child has unlimited potential to grow and if given an opportunity to unfold, it will go on growing and become a mature and complete person!

All qualities—wisdom, positive thinking, love, generosity, forbearance etc. are innate in man. Given a chance to grow, just as a seed grows to become a complete tree, a child would also grow into a complete man.

What hinders the growth or personality development in man? Man has to live in society where he encounters unwanted situations which can always disturb him. This could lead to the development of anger, hatred, malice, violence and negative thinking. These qualities then obstruct the natural course of growth of man. In such a scenario, man's personality development has just one requirement: that he develops in himself the quality of patience. He must learn to remain unaffected despite unwanted experiences. In other words, he must learn the art of unaffected living.

**Only for patience does Quran say that the reward
would be countless in measure.**

Now the question is how to lead an unaffected life? The method is very simple. It is all a matter of thirty seconds. Whenever you encounter an unwanted situation, you become impatient. If left unchecked, it would reach the state of a breakdown. If you want to check your unwanted reaction, you need to empty your mind for thirty seconds by observing silence. As a result, the anti-wave that had arisen would break and disperse. It would not become a part of your personality.

If you practise this, you would realise that for thirty seconds you were very disturbed but after thirty seconds, you became absolutely normal. After thirty seconds, the natural process returns.

If you want to check the veracity of this formula, you need to test it and practise it. In the first experience itself, you would find that this method is hundred percent successful. □



Use of The Printing Press

*The best use of the printing press is to publish positive news,
opportunities of life and scientific knowledge that unveils the signs of God.*

MATERIALISM AND SPIRITUALITY

Transient Joy or Eternal Pleasure

WHAT is spirituality or *rabbaniyat*, to use the Quranic term? It is the elevation of man to a plane where the mind is focused on the higher, non-material realities of a godly existence. Its opposite is materialism, a course followed all too often in this world.

To put it another way, he who focuses on mere appearances, is material-minded and the one who rises above it is spiritual. He obeys the injunction of the Quran:

Be devoted servants of God.

THE QURAN 3: 79

To understand what constitutes materialism, imagine yourself looking at a palatial house or an attractive car and being overcome by the desire to possess it. A person who is unmoved by these objects and the notions of luxury they convey, lives in a more rarefied sphere. For him there is little attraction in the world of superficiality, being engrossed as he is in the higher realities of a supremely spiritual life. A truly non-material person's soul exists at a profound level of spirituality. This is the unadulterated truth.

**Material pleasures are transient, whereas
the spiritual kind may be savoured eternally.**

Those who live for worldly pleasures believe that gratification cannot be had except through the enjoyment of material goods. But this kind of thinking is the result of sheer ignorance. Having only experienced worldly pleasures, these people come to believe that every kind of enjoyment depends on it alone. If they were to experience spiritual pleasure they would quickly forget about material pleasures which are transient, whereas the spiritual kind may be savoured eternally.

The taste of good food is enjoyable, but it is only when the experience of eating results in an outpouring of thanksgiving to God that we attain complete pleasure.

A car ride can be exhilarating, but the pleasure that comes from a deep perception of reality—on sensing the indescribably unique power of God as manifested in cars, aeroplanes and all the other modern

amenities created for man's comfort—is far superior to that which one experiences while travelling in a luxurious automobile.

A materially-minded person finds pleasure only in something which he or she actually experiences. The spiritual person will thank God even at the sight of another person's object. Rather, he transforms his friend's material pleasure into spiritual pleasure for himself. A materially-minded person only sees the creation while a spiritually inclined person sees the splendour of the Creator through the creation. It is obvious that the spiritual riches accruing from the discovery of the Creator cannot be gained through objects he created.

**A truly non-material person's soul exists at
a profound level of spirituality.**

Furthermore, in the spiritual world, there is no great difference between comfort and deprivation. What one gains from material experiences is of lesser value than what one learns from deprivation. Tears of pain hold greater lessons than laughter.

The greatest source of pleasure is in the remembrance of God. It is this reality which finds expression in the following verse of the Quran:

Only in the remembrance of God
are hearts comforted.

THE QURAN 13: 28

Comfort here implies peace of mind that stems only from God, and not merely temporary solace. Man is an idealist by nature. Anything short of ideals only attracts fitful attention.

Existing only at the materialistic level is like descending into animalism. Materialism is, in other words, a form of shallowness. A real man is one who discovers the secret of spirituality.

If in materialism there is pleasure of laughter, in spirituality, there is greater and lasting pleasure. If materialism is to live a life of limitations, spirituality is to live in boundless freedom. □



STARTING FROM SCRATCH

Motivation From Deprivation

EDSON Arantes do Nascimento, better known as Pelé was born in 1940 in Brazil. From his childhood days he showed a keen interest in playing football. However, Pelé grew up in abject poverty and could not purchase a proper football. His father was a footballer too but he could never earn enough to feed his family. Pelé's first football was made of socks filled with rags. Sometimes the stuffing was old newspapers, with a string used to tie the ball together. In this way, Pelé continued to play football as a child and in his youth, later adopting it as a professional career. Today, he is widely regarded to be the greatest football player of all time.

It is not accidental that a person unable to afford a football, reaches such an acclaimed position in the game. There are thousands of such cases in history. The law of nature helps explain this phenomenon in a rationally understandable manner.

Poverty is not deprivation. Rather, it is a challenge.

The fact is that every human being is born with great potential. One aspect of this potential is the urge to achieve one's goal. If a person is born in unfavourable circumstances, then this urge gets activated more intensely and becomes a source of great motivation. Self-motivation is so strong a quality that it can make a person achieve great heights without any external help.

Poverty is not deprivation. Rather, it is a challenge. The challenge then becomes greater than everything else, as it activates one's mind. It makes a person capable of concentrating all of one's energies on the achievement of one's goal. Pelé's case was not a miracle, instead it was a well-explained phenomenon of challenge.

In his autobiography, Pelé writes: "Poverty is a curse that depresses the mind, drains the spirit and poisons life. It is, being robbed of self-respect and self-reliance. Poverty is fear."

It is very strange that Pelé failed to draw a lesson from his own experience. He was born in poverty, but in terms of results, his poverty proved to be a blessing in disguise. It became a supporting factor for

him as it motivated him, unfolded his potential and enabled him to work very hard. This was a natural supporting mechanism for him in life. Had it not been for this initial condition of his, he would never have been able to become the champion he was. Pelé should have said: Although I inherited nothing from my family, the law of nature gave me something much more than what one's family can give.

Deprivation is a great motivator for achievement.

The experience of Pelé's life shows that hard work can overcome the problem of poverty. Poverty is an external problem, it is not an internal problem. Deprivation is a great motivator for achievement. One's inner reservoir has a huge amount of energy which can compensate every kind of disadvantage. □



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EDUCATION ALONE WILL NOT WORK

Renouncing Muslim Militancy

MALALA Yousafzai, is the youngest ever Nobel Prize recipient. Her mission is to educate the modern Muslim generation. It is said that Muslim militancy is one of the greatest problem of modern times, and this problem can be solved only through education.

This appears to be a good idea. But, the question is why are the ranks of Muslim militants filled with the well-educated, especially those who have studied in Europe and America. The fact is that modern militancy is based entirely on modern technology, and modern technology can be handled only by those who have modern education. Results show that solving the problem of Muslim militancy through education has not been successful. Events like 9/11 were the handiwork of educated Muslims, and not that of the uneducated.

The fact is that, modern Muslim militancy is based on the modern concept of Islamic *jihad*. It is this ideology of *jihad* which is the main reason behind militancy.

The real Islamic *Jihad* is based on peace and spirituality.

The problem is that some Muslim minds have developed an Islamic ideology that is based on the so-called *khilafat*, or Caliphate. According to this ideology, they believe that the mission of Islam is to establish the Caliphate. It is the duty of Muslims to establish Islamic rule all over the world. They believe that the western world is an obstacle in achieving this goal, and so they consider it an enemy of Islam. Thus, they wish to destabilize the western world, even if their method of choice is through suicide bombing. It is this self-styled ideology of *jihad* that is the real problem.

In such a situation, modern education cannot yield the required result. More modern education would give rise to greater militancy, because modern education increases the militants' access to modern technology. It helps them further equip their *jihad* machinery. Therefore, the thought of rooting out militancy by educating Muslims is not a novel idea.

Modern Muslim militancy can be eradicated neither through airstrikes nor through education. It can be eradicated only by providing a counter-ideology. The issue of terrorism is an issue of ideology versus ideology and not one of ideology versus the gun or ideology versus education. The right course is to re-engineer the modern Muslim mind. We should present to them the true ideology of Islam based on peace and tolerance. The real Islamic *jihad* is based on peace and spirituality. Therefore, the problem of Muslim terrorism can be solved only by reviving the real Islam and not by taking recourse to any other means.

Centre for Peace and Spirituality is an organization which aims to promote the culture of peace through mind-based spirituality. The Centre presents an ideology of peace, tolerance and co-existence that has been developed to address the modern mind.

Modern Muslim militancy can be eradicated only by providing a counter-ideology.

This ideology of peace based on the Quran, the preserved word of God, and the *Sunnah*, the sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad, is the only counter-ideology to the problem of violence. The Centre has published several books on Islam and the life of the Prophet of Islam, which show that Islam is a religion of peace. Many people after having read these books have developed rethinking in themselves and have abandoned the path of militancy and adopted the way of peace. □



Exalted Conduct

*When a man is enraged at anything
which goes against his will,
tolerance as a priority
becomes paramount.*

*The true superman is one who,
in really trying situations,
can demonstrate his
super-tolerance.*

THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

No Community Favoured

The Quran says:

The believers, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans
—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.

THE QURAN 2: 62

FOUR communities are mentioned in this verse: Muslims, who are the followers of the Prophet Muhammad; Jews who follow the Prophet Moses; Christians, who follow the Prophet Jesus; and Sabaeans, who adhered to the teachings of John the Baptist, the Prophet Yahya. The last-mentioned sect resided in Iraq in ancient times, but is now extinct. They were people of the Book, and offered their prayers facing the Kabah in Makkah.

No community is inherently superior to any other.

Here the Muslims have not been mentioned separately, but have been grouped with other communities associated with prophets. This means that all ethnic groups are equal in the sight of God; no community is inherently superior to any other. Only true belief and righteous actions are rewarded with salvation. This is the rule that applies consistently to every community.

No one, whether he calls himself Muslim, Jew, Christian or Sabaeans, is exempt from this rule. Belonging to a particular community gives no special status in the eyes of God. God elevates to a high rank only those who have sought to mould their own lives according to His divine scheme.

The lives of those who associate with a prophet during his lifetime are always based on true belief and righteous actions. At that time certain people hear the Prophet's call. Their spirits are moved by his message: an intellectual revolution takes place within them, filling them with new resolve. Their whole pattern of life changes. Where, previously, they had been guided by personal desires, they now base their lives on the teachings of God, and may truly call themselves followers of the

prophets; these are the ones to whom the prophets gave good tidings of eternal blessings in the next world.

The situation changes, however, as time passes. For the generations that follow, religion becomes a kind of national heritage. Tidings, which had been given on the basis of faith and righteous actions come to be considered to be the result of ethnic affiliations.

**God does not have a special relationship with
any particular community.**

People reckon that they have a special relationship with God that others do not enjoy: one who belongs to a particular community is sure to be saved, notwithstanding the standard of his faith and deeds; paradise is for us, hell for them. But God does not have a special relationship with any particular community. He has regard solely for man's thoughts and deeds. In the Hereafter, people will be judged according to their deeds and character, and not on the basis of the group to which they belong. □



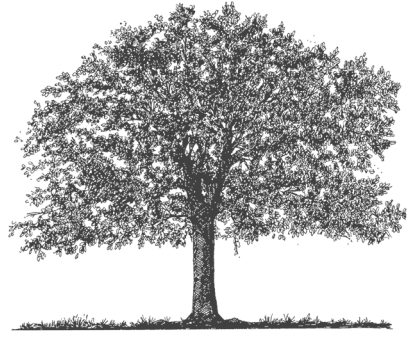
Creating History Anew

*We can create a nation only if
its inhabitants are imbued with
a sense of purpose and, to that end,
we must educate our people: they must have
full knowledge of both the past and the present
if they are to progress towards an ideal future.*

*We have to inculcate in them the will to work in a
united fashion in spite of their disagreements.
We have to instill in them the courage to
sacrifice their personal feelings and
their short-term interests for
long-term ones. Only then
will it be possible to
fashion history anew.*

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



INDIFFERENCE

WERE you to enquire of anyone about their beloved son; you will find they will have endless things to say about him. But, mention the name of God to the same person and he will be at a loss for words, having nothing to say about Almighty God.

Remind someone about their venerated ancestors, you will find that they speak with great reverence arising from the inner most feelings of their heart. But, mention the name of God to the same persons; they will be devoid of any feeling as though there is nothing to say about God.

Have people not witnessed the power of God and the perfection in His creation?

Speak to someone about their leaders and you will witness a flood of words in praise and affection for the leader. He will cease to converse only when he is interrupted with another topic. But, alas! If you were to mention the name of God to the same person, he will be unable to show any sentiments of love or regard. It will be apparent that he has no words in praise of God.

Talk to a person about his hero and you will find him most eloquent in speaking of the heroism of the one he adores. But, mention the name of God to this same person, you will realize that his heart contains no feelings to express about Almighty God.

**Have they not experienced the glory of God,
which they could share with others?**

Alas! Those people who have volumes in praise of man, but not even a few words in praise of God. They are storehouses of knowledge about people, but they have no knowledge about their awesome Creator that should flow from their tongues and pens. Are their hearts withered of all faith?

Have they not experienced the glory of God, which they could share with others? Have people not witnessed the power of God and the perfection in His creation? Do they only have knowledge of creation and no knowledge at all of the Majesty and bounty of God? □



Keep Your Word

*Not fulfilling promises is an extremely bad habit.
It is so bad that even the breaking of a
small promise is as serious in nature
as the breaking of the big kind.*

THE GREATER JIHAD

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ARGUMENTS AGAINST GOD AND RELIGION — Part I

From Physical Sciences

ATHEIST thinkers dismiss religion as being unfounded in fact. They maintain that it springs from man's desire to find meaning in the universe. While the urge to find an explanation is not in itself wrong, they hold that the inadequacy of our predecessors' knowledge led them to wrong conclusions; namely, the existence of a God or gods; the notions that creation and destruction were a function of the godhead; that man's fate was of concern to God; that there was a life after death in heaven or hell, as warranted by the morality of man's life on earth, and that all thinking on these matters must necessarily be regulated by religion. Here we examine the arguments against God or religion based on physical sciences.

Arguments against God and religion based on Physical Sciences

Atheist thinkers feel that in light of the scientific revolution, man is now in a position to make a re-appraisal of traditional ways of thinking and to rectify errors of interpretation, just as in secular matters he has already exploded myths and overturned false hypotheses whenever facts and experience have forced the truth upon him.

If events are due to natural causes, they are not due to supernatural causes.—*Julian Huxley*

According to Auguste Comte, a well-known French philosopher of the first half of the nineteenth century, the history of man's intellectual development can be divided into three stages—the theological stage, when events of the universe are explained in terms of divine powers; the metaphysical stage, in which we find no mention of specific gods (although external factors are still referred to in order to explain events); and the stage of positivism, where events are explained in terms of common laws deduced from observation and calculation without having recourse to spirit, God or absolute power. We are now passing through the third intellectual stage that in philosophical terms, is known as Logical Positivism.

Scientific empiricism, or logical positivism, became a regular movement

in the second quarter of the 20th century, but as a trend of thought, it had already—long before—taken hold of people’s minds. From Hume and Mill up to the time of Bertrand Russell, many philosophers have been its proponents, and it has now become the most important contemporary trend of thought, buttressed as it is by numerous centres of research and propagation all over the world. Logical positivism is defined as:

The philosophy of science (and knowledge) that holds that only statements that can be verified through logic or empirical data are true and meaningful.

Atheists feel, therefore, that man’s recent mental evolution is the antithesis of religious thinking. Modern, advanced knowledge claims that reality is only that which can stand up to the tests of observation and experience, whereas religion is based on a concept of reality which cannot, in this way, be subjected to analysis and scientifically proven: it follows then that it has no basis in actuality. In other words, religion gives an unrealistic account of real events. Since man’s knowledge was limited in ancient times, the correct explanations of natural phenomena were bound to elude him.

Nature is a fact, not an explanation.

This being so, the suppositions he made which hinged on religion were distinctly far-fetched and, at best, tangential. However, man has at last emerged from the darkness in which he was engulfed, and now, in the light of modern knowledge, it is possible for him to discard old, conjectural beliefs and arrive at the true nature of things by purely empirical methods. T.R. Miles writes:

It might be said that metaphysicians of the past have done something comparable to writing a cheque without adequate funds in the bank. They have used words without proper ‘cash’ to back them; they have been unable to give their words ‘cash-value’ in terms of states of affairs. ‘The Absolute is incapable of evolution and progress’ is a grammatically correct sentence; but the words are like a dud cheque, and cannot be ‘cashed’.

All those phenomena, which were formerly attributed to supernatural forces, are now wholly explainable in terms of natural causes; modern thinking asserting that the ‘discovery’ of God was a mere assumption

arising from ignorance. With the spread of knowledge, this belief has automatically disappeared. Julian Huxley writes:

Newton showed that God did not control the movements of the planets. Laplace in a famous aphorism affirmed that astronomy had no need of the god hypothesis; Darwin and Pasteur between them did the same for biology; and in our own century, the rise of scientific psychology and the extension of historical knowledge have removed gods to a position where they are no longer of value in interpreting human behaviour and cannot be supposed to control human history or interfere with human affairs.

Physics, psychology and history have proved conclusively that all those events which man explained in terms of the existence of a God or gods, or some abstract 'Power' had entirely different causes; but that man, steeped in ignorance, continued to speak of them in terms of religious mystery.

**Nature does not explain; she is herself
in need of an explanation.**

In the world of physics, Newton is one of the heroes of the scientific revolution. It was he who put forward the theory that the universe is bound by certain unchangeable principles, there being certain laws which govern the motion of all celestial bodies. Later, many other scholars carried this research forward to the point where all events on earth and in the heavens took place according to the immutable "Law of Nature".

After this discovery, it was but natural that the concept of an active and omnipotent God as the power, which made things move appeared meaningless. At most, this discovery allowed for a God who had initially set the universe in motion. Therefore, Newton himself, along with other like-minded scientists, believed in God as the Prime Mover. Voltaire for his part, said that God had created the universe in just the same way as a watch-maker made a watch, assembling the parts, arranging them in a particular order, but afterwards having nothing to do with it. Hume subsequently, abolished this "inactive and worthless God" by advancing the argument that we had seen watches being made, but that since we had not seen the world in the process of creation, it was not possible for us to believe in God.

Atheists maintain that the progress of science and the expansion of knowledge had enabled man to observe events which were beyond his observation in the past. Being in the dark about the chain of events, we had not been in a position to understand isolated events. Now, equipped with knowledge, we no longer stand in awe of natural phenomena. For instance, the rising and setting of the sun are now understood as matters of common knowledge. But, in early times, these events seemed inexplicable, and man supposed that there must be a God who was responsible for them. This led to the acceptance of there being a supernatural power: he described whatever was beyond man's knowledge as a miracle wrought by that power. But now that we know the rising and setting of the sun is the result of the earth's revolving upon its axis, where is the need to believe that there is a God who makes the sun rise and set?

If science is to replace religion, it shall have to discover the ultimate and absolute explanation.

Similarly, the functioning of all other things, which had been attributed to some invisible power, purported, according to modern studies, to result from the action and interaction of the natural forces now known to us. That is, after the revelation of natural causes, the need to posit, and to believe in the existence of God, or a supernatural force, vanished in and of itself. If the rainbow is merely a reflection of sunlight in minute droplets of water in the air, it is not, in any way, a sign placed in the sky by God. If the plague is inevitably an outbreak of this disease, it can no longer be looked on as a sign of divine wrath. If animals and plants have slowly evolved over hundreds of millions of years, there is no room for a 'Creator' of animals and plants, except in a metaphorical sense—quite different from that in which the word was originally and is now normally used. If hysteria and insanity are external symptoms of disordered minds, there is no place left in them for possession by devils. Citing such events in support of his argument, Julian Huxley observes with great conviction: "If events are due to natural causes, they are not due to supernatural causes."

Who Created God?

Many scientists including Stephen Hawking have acknowledged that it is reasonable to ask who or what created the Universe, but if the answer is God, then the question has merely been deflected to that of, who created God? Their argument is that, if we believe that the

Universe was created by God—a Creator—then we must believe that God also has a Creator who must also have a Creator and so on. In this way there will be an endless series of Creators. Hence, isn't it better to believe that this Universe came about without a Creator?

Summary of Arguments from Physical Sciences

God is an assumption arising from ignorance. All things formerly attributed to supernatural forces are now wholly explainable in terms of natural causes.

All events can be explained in terms of common natural laws deduced from observations and calculations without recourse to spirit, God or any form of absolute power.

If a universe can exist without a Creator, the existence of a Creator is also possible without a Creator.

Reality is only that which can stand up to tests of observation and experience. God is not an object of perception, and religion cannot be subjected to scientific analysis and proved. Therefore it is an unrealistic account of real events. i.e if events are due to natural causes they are not due to supernatural causes.

If God created the Universe, who created God?

Analysis of the Argument from Physical Sciences

Let us examine the argument which is based on research carried out in the field of the physical sciences, i.e. that studies of the universe have shown that whatever events take place do so in accordance with specific laws of nature.

This argument would have it that there is no necessity to assume the existence of an unknown God in order to explain these events, since known laws already exist to explain them. The best answer to this argument is the one given by a Christian theologian: 'Nature is a fact, not an explanation'.

Physicists, of course, are right in saying that they have discovered the laws of nature, but what they have discovered is not, in essence, the answer to the problems for whose solution religion has come into existence. It is religion, which points towards the real causes of the

creation of the universe, whereas the findings of physicists are confined to determining the outward structure of this universe, as it appears to exist before us.

What modern science tells us is only an elaboration upon, rather than an explanation of reality.

What modern science tells us is only an elaboration upon, rather than an explanation of reality. The entire body of modern scientific enquiry is concerned only with the question: 'What is it that exists?' The question: 'Why does it exist?' is far beyond its purview. Yet it is upon this second issue that we should be seeking enlightenment.

Eg: Digestion can now be explained as a chemical reaction under the control of enzymes but does not explain who determined such a reaction to take place with such control. The complexity of the various reactions and interactions to produce the digestive mechanism is so incredible that it is impossible to consider it an act of chance. It is only God who established these principles with the creation of life.

Eg: Rainfall — Science only gives more detailed information of the mechanism of rainfall but cannot ultimately tell us how or why these natural laws came into being, continue to exist and cause the universe to function with such precision.

The American biologist, Cecil Boyce Hamann, has this to say:

Where the mysteries of digestion and assimilation were seen as evidence of Divine intervention, they now are explained in terms of chemical reactions, each reaction under the control of an enzyme. But does it rule God out of His universe? Who determined that these reactions should take place, and that they should be so exactly controlled by the enzymes? One glance at a present-day chart of the various cyclic reactions and their interaction with each other rules out the possibility that this was just a chance relationship that happened to work. Perhaps here, more than any place else, man is learning that God works by principles that He established with the creation of life.

From this narrative, one can understand the actual value of modern discoveries. Science and technology having vastly increased the

practicability and precision of human observation, it has been possible to deduce the natural laws that govern the universe and according to which it functions to perfection. For instance, in ancient times, man simply knew that drops of water fell out of the clouds on to the earth. But now the whole process of rainfall is widely understood, from the evaporation of sea-water to the precipitation of rain and the final journeying of the fresh water back to the sea. But the kind of understanding brought by these discoveries is nothing but the possession of more highly detailed information, which does not tell us ultimately why these physical processes take place. Science does not tell us how or why the laws of nature came into being, how or why they continue to exist or why they cause the earth and the heavens to function with such unfailing precision that, simply by observing them, it was possible to establish immutable scientific laws. The claim that by learning the laws of nature one could arrive at an explanation of the universe was a mere delusion. It provided an answer to the question, but it was an irrelevant one in that it accepted the intermediary physical links in the chain as primary causes. As Cecil Boyce Hamann so aptly says, 'Nature does not explain; she is herself in need of an explanation'.

'Intelligent design' explains these similarities and disparities amongst species in nature as one of 'common design'.

'Why is blood red in colour?' If you were to ask a doctor the reason, he would answer, 'Because your blood contains millions of little red discs (5 million to each cubic centimeter), each some seven-thousandths of an inch in diameter, called the red corpuscles.

'Yes, but why are these discs red?'

'Because they contain a substance called haemoglobin, which, when it absorbs oxygen from the lungs, becomes bright red. That is why the blood in the arteries is scarlet. As it flows through the body, the blood gives up its oxygen to the organs of the body and the haemoglobin becomes brownish—this is the dark blood of the veins.'

'Yes. But where do the red corpuscles with their haemoglobin come from?'

'They are made in the spleen.'

'That's marvellous, Doctor. But tell me, how is it that the blood, the red

corpuscles, the spleen, and the thousand other things are so organised into one coherent whole, work together so perfectly that I can breathe, run, speak, live?’

‘Ah! That is nature.’

‘Nature!’

‘When I say “nature”, I mean the interplay of blind physical and chemical forces.’

‘But, Doctor, why do these blind forces always act as if they were pursuing a definite end? How do they manage to coordinate their activities so as to produce a bird which flies, a fish which swims, and me.... who ask questions?’

‘My dear friend, I as a scientist, can tell you how these things happen. Do not ask me why they are like that.’

While there is no gainsaying the fact that science has set up for us a vast storehouse of knowledge, this dialogue clearly shows that it has its limits. There is a point beyond which it can offer no further explanations. Its discoveries then fall very far short of giving us the kind of answers provided by religion. Even if the quantum of scientific discoveries were increased by billions, the necessity for religion would in no way be obviated, for such discoveries throw light only on what is concrete and observable. They tell us what is happening. They do not provide answers to the question, ‘Why is it happening?’ and ‘What is the primary cause?’ All such discoveries are of an intermediate, subsidiary and non-absolute nature.

Atheist thinkers assert that the “discovery” of God is a mere assumption arising from ignorance.

If science is to replace religion, it shall have to discover the ultimate and absolute explanation. Let us take the example of a machine which is functioning without our being able to see how it works, because it is enclosed in a metallic casing. When we remove this casing, we can see how the various cogwheels move in conjunction with a number of other parts of the mechanism. Does this mean that, in discovering the mechanics of the thing, we have truly understood the cause of its motion? Have we really grasped its secrets? And does the possession of knowledge about the functioning of a machine give us proof that it is self-manufacturing, self-replicating and is a perpetual motion

machine? If the answer to this is 'No', then how do a few glances at the mechanism of the universe prove that this entire system came into existence unaided and of its own accord, and is continuing to function independently? Criticizing Darwinism, A. Harris made a similar remark: 'Natural Selection may explain the survival of the fittest but cannot explain the arrival of the fittest'.

Many scientists of the present age have agreed upon the theory of evolution. This concept is becoming dominant in all scientific fields. An enchanting idol of spontaneous evolution has been set up in place of God. If the truth were told, the very dogma of organic evolution, from which all of the evolutionary concepts have been borrowed, is nothing but a hypothesis without any evidence. But this is not all. Some scientists have openly confessed that if they believe in the concept of evolution, it is simply because they can find no other alternative.

Those who believe in a universe without a Creator are not ready to believe in a Creator without a Creator.

Unable to find an explanation for the similarities and disparities amongst species in nature, evolution or 'common descent' is professed as the answer. Sir Arthur Keith (1866-1955) said in 1953 that evolution was unproved and unprovable and that we believed in it only because the only alternative was special creation and that was unthinkable. Scientists are thus agreed upon the validity of the evolution theory simply because, if they discard it, they will be left with no option but to believe in the concept of God.

'Intelligent design' explains these similarities and disparities amongst species in nature as one of 'common design' where the same materials (genes) have been used to construct species but employed in such a way, as to generate radically different kinds of creatures.

Cressy Morrison asks with reason in his book, *Man Does not Stand Alone*, 'How much must man advance before he fully realizes the existence of a Supreme Intelligence, grasps His goodness that we exist, assumes his full part in destiny and strives to live up to the highest code he is capable of understanding without attempting to analyse God's motive, or describe His attributes?'

In the matter of theology the modern mind is in grave confusion. Atheist philosophers have frequently asked, "If God has created the

Universe according to religious belief, who has created God?" But this question is totally illogical. It is sheer negation of logic. Furthermore, this objection is based on a clear contradiction. Those who believe in a universe without a Creator are not ready to believe in a Creator without a Creator. Therefore, if a universe can exist without a Creator, the existence of a Creator is also possible without a Creator.

Conclusion

Science is not an explanation of reality, it only elaborates upon nature. It is humanity's attempt at interpreting nature. It is only concerned with the question: 'What is it that exists?' The question: 'Why does it exist?' is far beyond its purview. Yet it is upon this second issue that we should be seeking enlightenment. Nature is a fact, not an explanation. Nature does not explain, she is herself in need of an explanation.

Scientific arguments pertain only to the material and physical world. In matters of the mind, soul, consciousness and conscience, science does not have much to offer.

Scientists tell us what is happening. They do not provide answers to the question, 'Why is it happening?' and 'What is the primary cause?' There is a point beyond which it can offer no further explanations. Science upholds religious truths but cannot be expected to authenticate them.

Modern research relies on the inferential method of scientific arguments as opposed to science based on direct observation. Quantum mechanics, the nature of light, electron configuration are all examples of this method of argument. How then can the same method of argument be not accepted when applied to religion?

Scientific arguments pertain only to the material and physical world and phenomenon therein. In matters of the mind, soul, consciousness and conscience, science does not have much to offer.

Things are as they are. We cannot change the hard reality: we simply have to acknowledge it, accept it, bow to it. Now, if we are not to adopt an ostrich-like attitude, our best course is to believe in actuality, rather than deny it. By denying the truth, it is man who loses. His denial of the truth in no way alters, harms, or diminishes it. The truth is the truth. □

.....to be continued.

MOTHER'S ADVICE TO HER SON

Make Excellence Your Goal

PABLO Picasso (1881-1973) was a Spanish painter. He was one of the greatest and most influential artists of the twentieth century. He is reported to have said: "When I was a child my mother said to me, 'If you become a soldier, you'll be a general. If you become a monk, you'll be the Pope.'" Picasso followed this advice until he emerged as one of the greatest artists of his times.

This advice of Picasso's mother was the best advice that a mother can give to her child. In other words, the advice was: Make excellence your goal. When a person adopts excellence as his goal, he develops a very noble quality in his personality—he exerts all his energies towards achieving success. He accepts nothing less than the best. He saves himself from all kinds of distractions. His thinking is focused. He inculcates the spirit of competition. He becomes very selective in his activities utilizing all his time without losing a single moment. This goal is bound to develop the spirit of self-development in a person. It inculcates the spirit of high thinking. All these qualities are positive qualities. Without utilizing these positive qualities, a person will not be able to achieve his goal.

The well-known Indian scientist Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam and former President of India, has rightly said: "Excellence is a continuous process and not an accident." One who adopts excellence as his goal, automatically becomes a different person. He inculcates a strong spirit of achieving his goal. He, consciously or unconsciously, becomes aware of the fact that excellence is the gradual result of always striving to do better.

If someone wants to become a doctor, he will naturally choose to take up medical education. Similarly, in the case of the above person: one who wants to achieve the best in any discipline, will automatically try to do one's best in order to achieve excellence in the chosen field.

This goal of excellence is not the same as developing the kind of mentality known as a superiority complex. A superiority complex is generally based on one's past glory. While the spirit of excellence motivates one to achieve in the future that which he does not possess at present. This goal develops in a person the spirit of hard work and self-development par excellence. It becomes a motivating force to achieve great heights of success. ◻

A PHENOMENON OF THE BODY, NOT OF THE SOUL

Innate Energy

RICHARD Allen (*b. 1963*) is the drummer for the English hard rock band Def Leppard. Since an early age he showed great interest in playing drums. At the age of fifteen he joined the band Def Leppard, when they were in search of a drummer. However, in 1984 at the age of twenty-one Allen met with a near fatal car accident. His left arm was seriously injured and had to be amputated.

Without the left arm, Allen could not play drums as before. But, he did not give up. Recuperating in hospital, he realized he could still play some of the drum parts with his remaining hand and his feet. Thus, Allen started learning to play on a customized drum kit. With a lot of practice, 20 months after the accident, in August of 1986, he was able to perform again as before. Finally, he emerged as an internationally-renowned drummer.

**Activate your inner energy, and very soon
you will achieve everything.**

How did this miracle happen? This can be understood by a study of the human personality. The human personality physically consists of the anatomical structure of the person that functions with the help of many different interacting systems and organs. But the inner human personality is only one, and is generally called the soul. If a person's hand or leg is cut off, his inner energy still remains intact—it does not get diminished. This is the reason that the energy from Rick Allen's amputated hand was diverted to the second hand. He could now do with one hand what he did earlier with both hands. This miracle was not the miracle of a person—it was the miracle of human nature, which is common to all.

If you lose one of your limbs or organs for any reason, do not fall prey to frustration. Although you may have lost a part of your physical being, your inner energy is still intact. Activate your inner energy, and very soon you will achieve everything in spite of having lost a part of your body. This is a law of nature. And, the law of nature does not change for any person. □

MISTAKE PLUS

Creativity From Error

ONE of the most important qualities that exalts a human personality is sincerity. The virtue of a person lies in the presence of sincerity in his personality. The defining role of this quality is that it converts a mistake into a 'mistake plus'. When a sincere person commits a mistake, he becomes intensely aware about it and regrets it deeply. He acknowledges it openly. A new thinking emerges in him about his mistake.

Thinking afresh about his actions, he introspects and re-aligns his priorities. This process leads to an increase in creativity. A person who commits a mistake and goes through this process sincerely, becomes a creative person after the mistake.

The important point to understand here, is not whether a person commits a mistake or not, but whether he is sincere or not. If he is lacking in sincerity then he will suffer the consequences of his errors throughout his life. Every time he commits a mistake, he will pay a heavy price for it.

This aspect of human life is a very serious and tragic one. The only solution is that man must strive to be sincere to the utmost extent. The positive side of this quality is that in the presence of such sincerity, this mistake will be converted into a mistake plus.

The virtue of a person lies in the presence of sincerity in his personality.

From the Quran, we learn that God created Adam and settled him in Paradise in complete freedom. There was only one tree that was forbidden to him. However, in spite of being warned, Adam committed the mistake of eating from the forbidden tree. But, Adam converted this mistake into a 'mistake plus'. Whilst Adam committed the mistake he also had sincerity within him. So, as soon as he erred, he was immediately aware of the mistake, acknowledged it and repented—seeking forgiveness from God.

After this Adam was expelled from Paradise to earth. Through him and his progeny, generations of mankind have spread far and wide. An

entire civilization has come about. Man has developed intellectually; a scientific revolution has brought about modern society and advanced human knowledge. All this was possible only because of the fact that Adam's mistake did not remain just a mistake; it was converted to a 'mistake plus' which opened the doors of creativity and re-thinking for mankind.

Satan, on the other hand also committed a mistake. But, being insincere he could not convert it into a 'mistake plus'. This mistake of Satan and his renunciation of the error made Satan even more rebellious deserving of eternal condemnation from God.

Through this incident in the beginning of creation, God established an example for mankind. Future generations of mankind had a precedent of the behaviour of both, Adam and Satan. In the example of Adam was the lesson that if man was truly sincere, he could convert his mistake into a 'mistake plus'. On the other hand, if man showed insincerity regarding his mistake, he would continue in error. Committing mistake after mistake, he would find one excuse or another to justify them until he joined the ranks of Satan and his followers, unable to return and reform from their sins.

A new identity of Muslims as a peace-loving and intellectual people would emerge in the world.

The violence and terrorism perpetrated by Muslims in the name of *Jihad* throughout the world is one such mistake. Their actions in the world today have shown that they are continuing with these mistakes and heading towards dissent and perdition.

If Muslims are truly sincere about the religion of God, they should openly acknowledge the violence and terrorism as their mistake and repent seeking forgiveness immediately. Then this mistake of theirs would become a 'mistake plus' after which a new thinking would develop in their minds. This new thinking would become an incentive for further development in knowledge and research. A new identity of Muslims as a peace-loving and intellectual people would emerge in the world. □



GET RID OF DEPRESSION

Discover The Creation Plan

DEPRESSION is a phenomenon of discontentment. Why does this phenomenon exist? The reason is that every person is born with an unlimited desire for enjoyment. But, everyone has very limited capacity of fulfilment. It is this gap in human nature that makes people live in unrest.

Is this phenomenon due to a defect in nature? Not at all. It is due to man's unawareness of himself that creates this problem. Self-awareness is the key to a contented life, while unawareness leads to all kinds of discontentment and restlessness.

To explain this phenomenon in the right way, we have to discover the scheme of this world as devised by the Creator. According to the creation plan, the domain of fulfilment in the material world is very limited; while, the domain of spiritual or intellectual fulfilment is so vast that words fail to express its endless boundaries.

**Even greater than the scientific pursuit is
the spiritual pursuit.**

If you want to achieve the state of fulfilment in the material world, then very soon you will discover that the scope here, is very limited. Food, clothes, fame, marital life, entertainment: each of these facets is associated with boredom.

Even going on a holiday cannot give you fulfilment. A person goes on a holiday with hopes of de-stressing, but instead returns with 'holiday stress'. This phenomenon of lack of fulfilment pertains to your physical being, but your spiritual being is free of such bindings.

Man has a dual personality; physical and spiritual. In physical terms, man's body measuring no more than a few feet is very limited. Due to this limited being, man develops boredom as far as his physical domain is concerned. But, his spiritual or intellectual being has no limits. Your mind travels in an unlimited space. It travels by means of thinking, and there is no boundary for the thinking process. It continues its journey unfettered, by crossing all kinds of barriers.

For example, the activities of a businessman are limited to the material world. Due to this limited nature, he very soon develops boredom. The American business magnate Bill Gates rightly said: "Once you get beyond a million dollars, I have to tell you, it's the same hamburger."

Scientific pursuit on the other hand, is an example of travelling in the intellectual domain. This is the reason why scientists do not speak in the limited language of a businessman. For example, Newton toward the end of his life, said about himself: "I was like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me." Likewise, was the feeling of the great scientific mind Albert Einstein, when he said: "The more I learn, the more I realize how much I do not know."

Even greater than the scientific pursuit is the spiritual pursuit. The reason for this is very clear. According to Galileo Galilei, the domain of the scientific pursuit is the study of the quantitative aspect of nature; while the domain of the spiritual pursuit is the qualitative aspect of nature. And, it is a fact that the qualitative is far greater than the quantitative domain of the world.

Self-awareness is the key to a contented life.

One who adopts the spiritual quest for his intellectual activities is a spiritual scientist. A physical scientist may stop at a certain point, but for the spiritual scientist even the saying 'sky's the limit' becomes irrelevant. Fulfilment through materialism is quite unachievable. It is only spiritual pursuits that can give you the sense of true fulfilment. □



Work is Paramount

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.

THE IDEOLOGY OF PEACE IN ISLAM

Unconditional Peace

SCHOLARS have defined peace thus: "Peace is the absence of war." This definition is absolutely correct. Peace in fact means the absence of a situation of war or violence.

However, some people hold this definition of peace to be inadequate. They say that justice should accompany peace; that peace devoid of justice is no peace. But setting such a condition for the attainment of peace is impractical. This is because peace on its own does not bring justice. Justice is not necessarily an element of peace. What peace does, in actual fact, is to open up opportunities. It creates favourable conditions that would enable us to strive for justice and other constructive ends.

Peace is always desirable for its own sake. Everything else comes after peace, not along with peace. The case of Japan is a concrete example of the success of this formula.

A peace policy always serves as a 'peace bomb', in the sense that it conquers the enemy without any bloodshed. History shows that the peace bomb has always proved to be mightier than the violence bomb.

Peace is always desirable for its own sake. Everything else comes after peace, not along with peace.

A peace bomb means life, and a violent bomb means death. A peace bomb leads to construction, while a violent bomb leads to destruction. Likewise, a peace bomb brings progress, while a violent bomb brings annihilation. Peace enhances creativity, whereas violence does the very opposite. The power of a peace bomb is based on love, while that of a violent bomb is based on hatred.

According to Islam, peace is therefore not simply an absence of war; peace opens doors to all kinds of opportunities that are present in any given situation. It is only in a peaceful situation that planned activities are possible. It is for this reason that the Prophet Muhammad went to great extents to establish peace at all costs. The treaty of Hudaibiya, between the Prophet and his opponents, provides one such clear

example. From the details of the peace treaty, it is clear that no clause regarding justice was included. Obviously the conditions of this treaty were quite against justice. But the Prophet accepted this treaty, not because it was giving them justice, but because it was paving the way to work for justice. It is for this reason that the Quran says:

Reconciliation is the best.

THE QURAN 4: 128

Therefore, according to Islam, the only practicable formula for obtaining peace is:

‘Ignore the problems, avail of the opportunities.’

Because of the importance of peace, the Quran has clearly declared that no aggressive war is permitted in Islam. Muslims can engage themselves only in a defensive, not an offensive war, irrespective of the circumstances (THE QURAN 2: 190).

Similarly the Prophet Muhammad has observed:

God grants to gentleness (*rifq*) what
He does not grant to violence (*unf*).

Sunan Abu Dawud 4/255

The Quran has this to say of the mission of the Prophet Muhammad:

We have sent you forth as a mercy to all mankind.

THE QURAN 21: 107

**Peace opens doors to all kinds of opportunities
that are present in any given situation.**

No wonder, then, that the Prophet Muhammad so earnestly used to entreat his Lord in his daily prayer: “O God, You are the original source of Peace; from You is all Peace, and to You returns all Peace. So, make us live with Peace; and let us enter paradise: the House of Peace. Blessed be You, our Lord, to whom belongs all Majesty and Honour!” □



THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures

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

Translated from Arabic and commentary
by **Maulana Wahiduddin Khan**

Have you not seen that God sends down water from the sky, guides it to form springs in the earth, and then, with it, brings forth vegetation of various colours, which later withers, turns yellow before your eyes, and then He makes it crumble away? There is truly a reminder in this for those who possess understanding. Anyone whose heart God has opened up to Islam possesses a light from his Lord. But woe betide those whose hearts have been hardened against the remembrance of God! Such people are in obvious error. 39: 21-22

The wonderful system of rains on the earth, the resulting growth of greenery and the subsequent preparations for harvesting, have countless meaningful lessons in them. But, these lessons are available only to those who devote themselves to deep thought.

On one hand, God has created the external world in a way that everything in it has become a sign of great realities, and, on the other, He has endowed man with the ability to read these signs and understand them. Those who keep their natural capabilities alive and, by utilising them, give deep consideration to the things of the world, will have their minds filled with the deep realisation (*ma'rifah*) of God. Whereas those who do not keep these capabilities alive, will be unable to learn anything, even though surrounded by countless lessons. They will not be able to see, even after seeing, and will not be able to hear, even after hearing.

God has sent down the best Message: a Scripture that is consimilar and oft-repeated: that causes the skins of those in awe of their Lord to creep. Then their skins and their hearts soften at the mention of

God: such is God's guidance. He bestows it upon whoever He will; but no one can guide those whom God leaves to stray. 39: 23

God has blessed man with a guidebook in the form of the Quran. It has two special qualities. One of its qualities is that it is marked by utmost consistency. In other words, it is a book which has no contradictions. One part does not clash with another. If the Quran's statements had not corresponded exactly with reality, there would have been differences between and inconsistencies in its various parts.

The second quality of the Quran is its use of repetition; that is, its topics are often repeated in different styles. This quality in the Quran shows that it is a book of advice and guidance. An adviser always wishes that his words should establish themselves firmly in the mind of the hearer. For this purpose, he expresses the same statements in different ways. This wisdom is found in the Quran in its best form.

It is the nature of man that when he hears some terrible news, or he undergoes some hair-raising experience, his inner being is humbled and his heart is softened by the news. When a serious man reads the Quran, he undergoes such spiritual experiences.

What about the one who will have only his bare face to protect him from his terrible punishment on the Day of Resurrection? The evil-doers will be told, 'Taste what you have earned.' Those before them also denied the truth, and the punishment fell on them from where they did not expect. God gave them a taste of humiliation in the life of this world, but the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew it. 39: 24-26

Man always tries to save his face from injuries, but the punishment of Doomsday will so encompass man that it will not be possible for him to save any part of his body. In fact he will stand before the ineluctable punishment, as if using his face as a shield against it.

In the eyes of God, the greatest crime a man can commit is not to admit to the Truth when it reveals itself to him. Such people can never escape the scourge of God.

We have set forth to men all kinds of parables in this Quran so that they may take heed: a Quran in Arabic, free from any ambiguity—so that people may be mindful. God sets forth a parable: there are two men—one belonging to many masters, all disagreeing with one

another, and the other belonging entirely to one master: are those two equal in comparison? Praise be to God! But most of them have no knowledge. You will die and they too will die, and, then on the Day of Resurrection you shall place your dispute before your Sustainer.

39: 27-31

The Quran's statements are in a language intelligible to man and within the sphere of his knowledge, so that nobody should have any difficulty in understanding them.

Here, in symbolic language, it has been explained that the principle of the Unity of God as compared to polytheism is more rational and consistent with nature. Indeed, the functioning of the external universe is indicative of the fact that a single Will is operative in it. Had there been many intentions operative therein, the system of the universe could not have run so harmoniously. Moreover, man's nature is also such that it prefers unity in loyalty. It is entirely against man's nature to subscribe to different kinds of loyalties, as a result of which he is unable to do justice to any of them.

All arguments and possibilities indicate that there is only one God, who is the Creator of man and who is worthy of being worshipped by him. In the present world, this fact is proclaimed through men like us. On the Day of Judgement, this will be declared by the Creator of the Universe Himself. At that time, denial of this fact will be impossible. □



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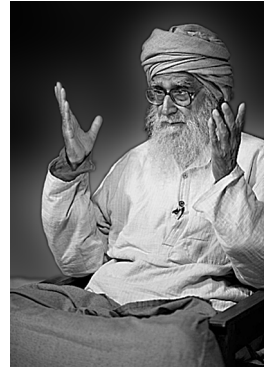
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ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

What are the differences between the major religions of the world?

Religion means the ideology of truth. The major religions of the world can be divided into two broad categories—the Aryan and the Semitic, with Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism falling in the former; and Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the latter.



As far as their theological aspects are concerned, there is a marked difference between these two kinds of religions. While the Aryan religions are basically philosophy-based, the Semitic religions are Revelation-based. The former represents the culmination of the philosophical pursuit of truth by the great minds of the world. In the quest for reality, meditation and contemplation brought these saintly souls to the conclusions that gave rise to the organized religions of the eastern hemisphere.

The creeds of the Semitic religions on the other hand, are based on divine revelation. That is, God chose a series of Semites to be His apostles and then imparted to them His commandments. These messengers were the bearers of divine scriptures and these divine scriptures provided the fundamentals of the Semitic religions, as they exist today.

The basic difference with respect to beliefs of the Aryan and Semitic religions can be briefly described in terms of monism and monotheism respectively.

Although both traditions—monism and monotheism—have the idea of God in common, there are fundamental differences in their conceptualization of God. In the Aryan tradition, God is an all-pervasive force rather than an independent reality. Monism posits the totality of a single reality, with all the diverse phenomena of the natural world seen as different manifestations of the same reality.

According to this concept, therefore, there is no real difference between the creator and the creature. Thus as per the monism concept of an individual, a personalized God does not exist.

Did God send guidance to all nations?

Along with creating man, God started a chain of prophethood for human guidance. In every age and in every nation prophets have come and conveyed the message of God to men. The Quran says:

Has he not heard of what is preached in the books of Moses and Abraham, who fulfilled his duty: that no soul shall bear another's burden and that each man shall be judged by his own labours; that his labours shall be scrutinized and that he shall be justly requited for them; that all things shall in the end return to God?

THE QURAN 53: 36-41

While provision for the sustenance of life remained constantly available in this world, the principles of how to lead this life were sent to man by God again and again as the occasion demanded. Each prophet was truly a representative of God. But, with the passage of time, the books brought by the messengers were altered and marred by the interpolations of their followers. Thus the original divine guidance became veiled by these human additions. Ultimately God sent the Arab Prophet with the Quran. And God Himself undertook the responsibility of preserving the Quran in totality so that it might remain a source of authentic guidance for mankind for all time to come.

The essence of the reality revealed by God through the Prophet is that everyone will necessarily be rewarded for his actions in this world. None can escape the consequences of his actions, nor can anyone save another. Those who fail to take heed of the warnings by the Prophet are the most foolish in this world.

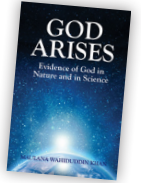
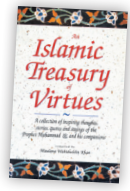
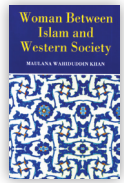
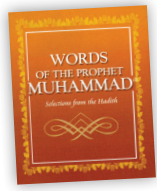
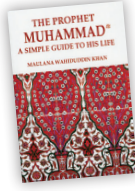
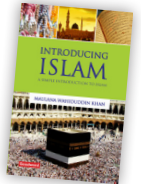
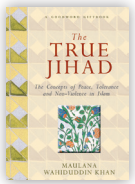
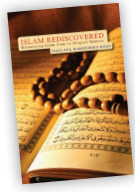
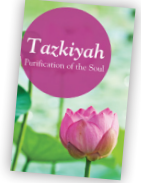
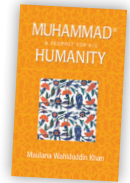
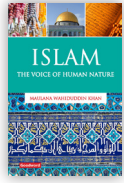
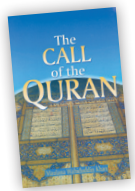
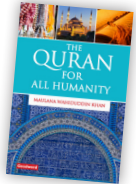
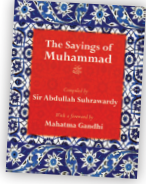
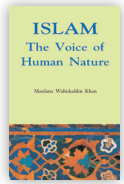
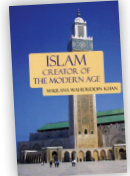
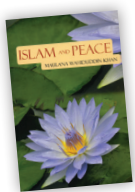
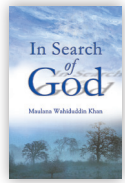
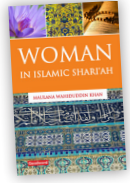
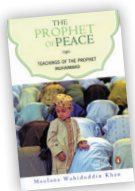
So far as man's relation to God is concerned, everyone is responsible for his own actions. None can share in the consequences of another's deeds. Nor will anyone reap a harvest in the next world other than what he has sown here in this world. □



True Reform

*The legal system and the administration have their limits.
Genuine reform will come about only if the spirit of reform
is generated among the people concerned.*

Spiritual Writings of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



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