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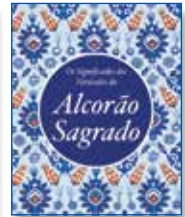
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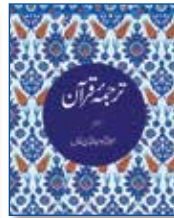
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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

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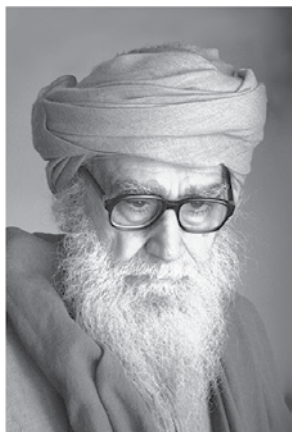
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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

HAJJ SHOULD INCULCATE LOVE FOR HUMANITY

IT is incumbent upon Muslims to perform Hajj, at least once in a lifetime, as long as they possess the means. As is clear from the following excerpts from the Quran and *Hadith*, Hajj is an important pillar among the five foundation pillars of Islam.

Pilgrimage to the House is a duty to God for anyone who is able to undertake it. (3: 97)

The root meaning of the word Hajj is “to set out” or “to make pilgrimage.” Canonically, it has come to refer to a Muslim act of worship, performed annually, in which the worshipper circumambulates the House of God in Makkah, stays awhile in the plain of Arafat and performs other rites which together constitute Hajj—the act of pilgrimage.

To be a member of that huge congregation gathered from the four corners of the earth,

A true pilgrim cannot afford to differentiate between a Muslim and a person of another faith. He has to be a well-wisher to everyone.

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

on this sacred occasion and on the sacred spot, and to join with this mass of humanity, in all humility, in the glorification of God, is to have one's consciousness impressed by full significance of the Islamic ideal. It is to be privileged to participate in one of the most soul-inspiring experiences that have ever been granted to human beings. To visit the birthplace of Islam, to re-live those memories and to tread the sacred ground of the Prophet's struggle, during his mission to invite humanity to God, is to have one's soul kindled by celestial fire of peace with God and His creatures.

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

Islam is based on two fundamental truths: (a) the oneness of God and (b) the brotherhood of Man, and is entirely free from any encumbrances of theological dogma. Above everything else, it is a positive faith.

The lesson learnt during Hajj has to manifest in terms of living peacefully in unity with the rest of the world.

The Hajj makes for unity among Muslims. If there is anything that unifies the scattered forces of Islam and imbues them with mutual sympathy, it is the pilgrimage. It provides them with a central point to which they rally from all corners of the earth. It creates for them annually an occasion to meet and know one another, to exchange views and compare experiences and unite their various efforts for the common good. Distances are annihilated.

Differences of sect are set aside. Divergences of race and colour cease to exist in this fraternity of faith that unites all Muslims in one great brotherhood and makes them conscious of the glorious heritage that is theirs.

This lesson of Hajj, which is aimed at inculcating unity among Muslims, should be extended to entire humanity. Once a pilgrim returns after performing Hajj, he is back into the world where he has to live alongside other people who belong to different faiths and beliefs. Here, the lesson learnt during Hajj has to manifest in terms of living peacefully

in unity with the rest of the world. A true pilgrim cannot afford to differentiate between a Muslim and a person of another faith. He has to be a well-wisher to everyone. Whatever positive contribution he makes should have its effects for everyone around him. His goodness will not be confined to the people of his own community. In fact, he will consider the entire mankind as one community. He joins with the people of his community at the time of worship, but he certainly includes the well-being of all of mankind in his prayers to God. □

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Patience & Wisdom

Some people go to extremes in their opposition to others by turning aggressive. But in this world that God has made, your opponents too, have the freedom to act, just like you do.

The best way to respond to others is to clear your own way ahead by exercising patience and wisdom instead of becoming agitated by others and reacting angrily.

SCIENCE AND GOD-REALIZATION

Rational Explanation

IF on a trip away from the city, you chance to lift your head up and look at the sky, you will see thousands of stars; beautiful, magnificent and wonderful stars. If you observe them carefully for some time, you will see that they are slowly moving across the sky. This apparent movement of the stars across the sky is because of the earth's rotation. In fact, some stars seem to move faster than others. This is because of the distance between the stars. This difference in apparent movement is called parallax. In the case of stars, this is very helpful, since it helps us measure the distance between us and the star in question.

Fourteen centuries ago however, little was known about the stars. The earth was thought to be flat and the heavens a kind of vault resting on the hilltops which provided a roof over the earth. Stars were considered as close to one another as they appeared to be. It was generally believed that the earth was stationary and that the sun revolved around it. People believed that the universe had existed since eternity. Even the greatest thinkers of the time believed in a static model of the universe.

At such a time, the Quran said:

Do not those who deny the truth see that the heavens and the earth were joined together and that We then split them asunder? (21: 30)

Up to about a hundred years ago, it was generally accepted that the universe existed in infinite time. Only now, we find that modern studies in astronomy have confirmed the truth of this verse in the Quran. According to the prevailing and current scientific view of cosmology, the universe had a distinct and singular beginning about 13.7 billion years ago in what is commonly referred to as the Big Bang. This model of the universe also describes how the universe expanded from a very high density and high temperature state. It offered a comprehensive explanation to various natural phenomena including the formation of galaxies, stars and planets, our earth and the elements required to sustain life.

The star nearest to us, apart from the sun, is called Proxima Centauri and is about four light-years away from us (meaning light from that star takes about four years to reach us) or about 40 million million kilometres. In comparison, light from the sun takes only about eight minutes to reach us. The stars seem to be spread across the entire sky but are actually concentrated in one particular band, which we call the

Milky Way galaxy. We now know that the Milky Way—our galaxy is not the only galaxy. In 1924, the American astronomer Edwin Hubble found many others, with huge areas of empty space in between them. But these galaxies were so far away that they appeared not to move at all and their distance from us could not be directly measured.

Scientific developments have enabled us to study and observe these stars and galaxies which would not have been possible at the time when the Quran was revealed. Another way to measure the distance of a star or galaxy from us is by its brightness. The temperature of a star can also be calculated by focusing a telescope on a particular distant star and passing its light through a prism. This light splits up into different colours—called the star's spectrum. Different stars have different spectra but a specific temperature shows a specific spectral pattern. If we know the temperature of a star, and therefore its luminosity, and its apparent brightness, its distance from us can be calculated.

As astronomers began to study these distant galaxies, they discovered that the light from each galaxy showed the same spectral pattern. To understand the implications of this, we must first understand that light travels in waves. The size of the wave, called wavelength, determines its colour. Visible light consists of seven colours: red—which has the longest wavelength and therefore the largest waves, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet—which has the shortest wavelength and therefore the smallest waves.

Here is evidence of the Quran having its source in an Omnipresent and Eternal Mind—One Which knows all in their true forms and Whose knowledge has not been conditioned by time and circumstance.

Now, the spectral pattern of the galaxies was all found to be slightly shifted to the red side. Different stars emit light at different wavelengths. If the stars were stationary, the light we receive would be in the same wavelength in which it was sent. But if the stars were moving away from us, the light would be being stretched as it was sent—

which means its wavelength would keep increasing—becoming red. If all galaxies were being shifted to the red, it meant that they were all moving away from us. This meant that the universe was expanding—like how points marked on a balloon move further and further away from each other as the balloon grows in size.

Fourteen centuries ago, the following verse was revealed to Prophet Muhammed in the Quran:

***And it is We who have built the universe, with Our creative power;
and truly, it is We who are steadily expanding it. (51: 47)***

With the advances made in the field of science and technology, the range of human observation and experiment have vastly increased, opening up great vistas of knowledge about the universe. In all spheres of existence and in all disciplines of science, previously established concepts were proved wrong by later research and were discarded. This means no human work dating back 1500 years can claim total accuracy, because all 'facts' must now be re-evaluated in the light of recent information. But when one reads and understands the verses in the Quran related to the universe, one can observe that it is free of errors.

For a serious reader this can be an evidence of the Quran having had its source in an Omnipresent and Eternal Mind—One Which knows all facts in their true forms and Whose knowledge has not been conditioned by time and circumstances. □



Human Mind

*The human mind has great potential
but it can only work in a peaceful
atmosphere. In the absence of the
peaceful environment for work,
the mind's capabilities will remain
unutilized—the process that unfolds
the potential of the mind will be left
uninitiated.*

ONE-SIDED REPORTING

Unfair Practice

PEOPLE generally have the habit of stating only one half of the story—they make mention of its latter half, but do not speak a word about its first part. For example, a man was once hit by another person. While recounting what happened with him, he simply said that he was beaten up by someone. However, he did not reveal what he had himself done which had provoked the other person to react in anger.

Similarly, at one time a dispute occurred between two groups, which led to instances of maltreatment and persecution of members of one group by another. In all such incidents, it almost always happens that one group, owing to its actions, provokes the other group into taking retaliatory measures. This results into a riot. However, when it comes to detailing the account of such events, it is seen that people of the first group would only relate the second half of the story. They would blame the other group for carrying out the rioting, but would never specify the action they had originally taken which provoked the second group to exact revenge.

This tendency can be called incomplete or one-sided reporting of events. Such kind of reporting is very common in our society. Every person has the habit of recounting an incident in such a manner that only the involvement of the other person is apparent, while they remain silent about their own involvement in the matter. This manner of reporting is unjust and biased. Moreover, speaking of events in this way is a sign of intellectual dishonesty as it goes against the demands of justice and fairness. Looking at a situation in this one-sided manner of reporting is ethically incorrect and is of no use when it comes to finding a solution to the problem or dispute.

A person who gives an incomplete account of facts may be happy himself, but as far as the world outside of him is concerned, this attitude can have no positive consequence whatsoever. □

One-sided manner of reporting is ethically incorrect and is of no use when it comes to finding a solution to the problem or dispute.



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HAJJ

For Personality Development

ACCORDING to a saying of the Prophet, when a believer returns home after performing Hajj, he is as he was on the day on which his mother gave birth to him (*Sahih al-Bukhari*). In other words, such a person returns after Hajj as a newborn child. Here, a newborn refers to the pure nature of a child.

The above saying can be understood in the light of another teaching of the Prophet according to which every person is originally born on nature, but then he gets conditioned in the environment he lives in. Reflecting on the above words of the Prophet, we realize that if one performs Hajj in its right spirit, one will return to one's pure nature.

This returning to true nature is not something which happens in a miraculous way. It is an intellectual concept and requires one's conscious involvement. It is known as de-conditioning. The worship of Hajj will create awareness in the worshipper about the fact that every one without any exception becomes conditioned due to the influence of the environment in which they live. Therefore, one is in need of de-conditioning oneself from all that is wrong and to return to one's God-given pure nature. Hajj is a worship which facilitates one's de-conditioning—it is like a course which serves to do away with a person's environmental conditioning and brings him back to his original nature.

Hajj is a worship which facilitates one's de-conditioning—it is like a course which serves to do away with a person's environmental conditioning and brings him back to his original nature.

One who was initially a conditioned person, after performing Hajj, can return to his pure nature. However, only that person can avail of these benefits of Hajj who performs it in its true spirit. For a person who merely carries out the rites of Hajj without being aware of their spirit, the pilgrimage will be nothing more than a kind of outing.

The Prophet had explained to his Companions that the various rites of Hajj were a kind of symbolic repetition of the different phases of the life of the Prophet Abraham. The entire life of the Prophet Abraham was devoted to a mission. Every believer is required to adopt this life pattern in personal life. For example, *ihram*—the attire of the pilgrim comprising of two unstitched pieces of cloth is a symbol of simplicity.

The ritual of *tawaf*, which involves circumambulating the Kabah seven times, indicates dedicating oneself for a purpose.

Tawaf is followed by *sae'e* that is, running or walking seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwah, located near the Kabah. *Sae'e* encourages one to direct one's efforts and struggles towards drawing in nearness to God the Creator. The pilgrim's sacrifice of the animal is a way of taking the pledge to lead a life of sacrifice. Stoning of the devil, known as *ramy al-jamarat*, is symbolic of rejecting satanic influence on oneself. Lastly, the pilgrims enter the plains of Arafat with the words '*Labbayk! Labbayk!*' (O God, here I come!). This is meant to remind one of the Day of Resurrection when every human being will have to stand before God for accountability.

The Prophet had performed Hajj towards the end of his life. On this occasion, all of the Prophet's Companions gathered in the plain of Arafat, which is 20 kilometres east of Makkah. Here the Prophet delivered a sermon while being mounted on his camel. This sermon is famously known as *Khutbah Hajjatul Wida*, or 'The Sermon of the Farewell Pilgrimage'. At this juncture, the Prophet addressed his contemporary believers thus: "God has sent me for all mankind, so convey [my message] on my behalf." When the Prophet issued this call, the Companions went forward in whichever directions their horses were facing, so that they could reach out to those people who were still unaware of the message of God brought by the Prophet. The efforts of the Companions helped in conveying the teachings of Islam to the inhabited world of that time.

According to Islam, believers should perform Hajj or Umrah once in their lifetime and then vow to lead their lives according to the lessons learnt during pilgrimage.

This history of the Companions of the Prophet gives us the lesson that the end of Hajj marks the beginning of a new action. The point at which the rites of Hajj come to an end is also the place from where another 'Hajj' begins on a much vaster scale, which is, conveying God's message to people.

Hajj is the greater pilgrimage, while *Umrah* is the lesser pilgrimage. *Umrah* is a pilgrimage to Makkah that can be undertaken at any time of the year, unlike Hajj which happens only once in a year. Islam does not require Muslims to repeatedly perform Hajj or *Umrah*. According to Islam, believers should perform Hajj or *Umrah* once in their lifetime and then vow to lead their lives according to the lessons learnt during pilgrimage. They must also resolve to dedicate their lives to conveying this learning to all mankind. □

DEVELOP A CREATIVE MIND

A Conscious Effort

THE well-known British philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) says of himself in his autobiography: “When I survey my life, it seems to me to be a useless one, devoted to impossible ideals. My activities continue from force of habit, and in the company of others, I forget the despair which underlies my daily pursuits and pleasure. But when I am alone and idle, I cannot conceal from myself that my life has no purpose, and that I know of no new purpose to which to devote my remaining years.”

Bertrand Russell started his life as a star personality. But when he died at the age of 97, his was a case of frustration. What was the reason behind this tragedy? An analysis of the above statement gives us the answer. One of Russell’s cherished goals was the establishment of a ‘single supreme world government’ capable of enforcing peace. According to him, the only thing that would redeem mankind was co-operation, which could be achieved only through a world government. Russell devoted his life to the achievement of this goal. However, he failed utterly.

Failure in life is not final defeat. Failure means that a man has failed in achieving the first choice, but he still has the second choice. Bertrand Russell failed to discover the second choice. This was Russell’s real failure.

Failure in life is not final defeat. Failure means that a man has failed in achieving the first choice, but he still has the second choice.

It is said that Russell was a voracious reader. However, according to his own confession, his study was done out of habit. Habits are current, unconscious pattern of behavior that is acquired through frequent repetition. This was Russell’s weakness. He studied a lot, but he did so as a habit rather than by way of conscious planning. If you do something as a matter of conscious planning, it will make your mind creative. But, if you do something as a habit, then it will not develop creative thinking. Doing something out of habit is the

same as an animal’s doing things by instinct. What is instinct for an animal, is habit for human beings.

Doing something as a result of conscious planning develops a person’s mind and leads to creative thinking. One who plans consciously is

capable of engaging in introspection, reassessing his work and taking a U-turn in his life. Then he can make a new choice for himself. A creative mind is an active mind which is in a position to take new decisions every moment.

The ideal that Bertrand Russell had set as his goal was not achievable. Had Russell been a creative mind, he would have re-examined his goal and made a new choice. This would have made his life meaningful once again.

Experience shows that people generally lack creative thinking. The reason for this is people mostly do not consciously plan their activities. Instead they work out of habit. Even if they begin their work by conscious planning, they slowly become habitual to it and start working unconsciously. Such a person cannot take a new decision in life. He will live as a prisoner of his habits, although what is right is for him to have a living mind.

Man should do everything as a result of conscious planning. A conscious plan will have the right goal and right goals will be fulfilled. When goals are fulfilled there is no room for frustration. And in case the goal is not right, his creative mind will take a new decision and reset his priorities.

Habit is a general term. It covers almost all human activities, from becoming addicted to wine to being part of politics—everything comes under its purview. Frustration is only for those who do things habitually. Those who do things by way of conscious planning can never become victims of frustration. □



Power

*In this world, one has power
only over oneself. No one has
any power over any other
individual.*

SUPPORTING ROLE

A Law of Nature

WE learn from the Quran that when God created the first man, Adam, He commanded the angels to prostrate themselves before him. This self-prostration was not meant to be interpreted as bowing down in worship. It only signified that man would inhabit the earth and that the angels would then have to play a supporting role for him.

While Noah was building the ark, God said to him: "Build the ark under Our eyes and in accordance with Our revelation." (11: 37). This commandment did not relate solely to the ark, but rather to all matters pertaining to man. Whenever man does anything, he does so with the support of the angels. Without this support, man can achieve nothing. Modern civilization built by man is undeniably a great feat, but there is no doubt that it was done with the support of the angels.

There is a difference in capabilities between men, so that mutual cooperation becomes a necessity in any undertaking.

It is this principle of nature which is desirable to follow between man and man too. When man performs any great feat, it is brought to fruition by the support of a number of people.

According to the laws of nature, in this support system some play the leading role while others play a supporting role. Regarding human support, this principle has been mentioned in the Quran as follows:

We raise some of them above others in rank, so that they may take one another into service. (43: 32)

There is a difference in capabilities between men, so that mutual cooperation becomes a necessity in any undertaking. Had all human beings been bestowed with the same capabilities, cooperation would not have been an imperative. People must understand this system of nature and be willing to play their role according to their God-given capabilities. □



HELL AND HEAVEN

A Most Serious Matter

I have not seen anything as dreadful as the Fire whose evader is asleep and anything as desirable as Paradise whose seeker is asleep.

(Prophet Muhammad)

WHY is it that people do not flee from something so undesirable as Hell? And why is it that they do not make something so desirable as Heaven their aim and destination? It is because of being neglectful. This neglect is because of people's tendency to concern themselves only with what they can see externally. As a result of this, their minds are not awakened. They remain ignorant of realities they ought to be aware of.

In terms of the reality of life, human beings ought to think, first and foremost, of what is the way to lead a successful life according to God's creation plan. There is no other way to make one's life successful.

According to God's creation plan, a successful person is he who, after the completion of his time here in this world, is declared eligible for Paradise in the Hereafter. In contrast, failure is when someone finishes his term in this world and arrives in the Hereafter only to find the angels of Hell ready to arrest him.

This is the greatest issue facing mankind. No person can afford to be unconcerned about it. This is the reality referred to in the above-cited *Hadith*. □

In terms of the reality of life, human beings ought to think, first and foremost, of what is the way to lead a successful life according to God's creation plan.



A successful Life

The key to a successful life in this world is to be beneficial to others.

THE PROPHET'S LIFE WAS AN OPEN BOOK

True Character

ACCORDING to the Quran, the Prophet of Islam lived an exemplary life. Different aspects of the prophetic character are described in the Quran, one of which is alluded to in the chapter *Yunus* (Jonah). The translation of the relevant verse is as follows:

Say, 'If God had so wished, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have brought it to your knowledge. Indeed, I have spent a whole lifetime among you before it came to me. How can you not use your reason?' (10: 16)

According to this Quranic verse, the Prophet's life was an open book. His character was known to everyone in minute detail. No chapter of his life's book was hidden from his contemporaries. He was accessible to everyone at all times. He was available to answer people's questions. His life was as transparent as glass. Even his enemies could not say of him that there was any contradiction between his private life and his public life.

Leading a blameless life and having sterling qualities makes one predictable and encourages others to accept one as a trustworthy person.

This was not simply a personal matter. It had great social value. Leading a blameless life and having sterling qualities makes one predictable and encourages others to accept one as a trustworthy person. It was due to such a character, the Prophet projected such a noble image in Makkah that people gave him the very exceptional title of *al-sadiq al-amin*, that is, truthful and trustworthy.

It was this flawless character of the Prophet that prevented anyone in ancient Arabia from saying: "O Prophet, you are telling a lie, we cannot believe that your claim of being a Prophet of God is true." When he proclaimed that God had appointed him as a prophet, no one was able to deny his claim. This miracle of his acceptance was wrought purely by the sublimity of his character. Almost all those who had a close relationship with him, and were well-informed about his life, accepted him as a prophet at the very first instance, either publicly or privately.

Once a Makkan leader met the Prophet and told him that the Makkans had reservations about what he had to say about divine revelations, because they had never witnessed an angel of God coming to him to reveal the word of God. But he added: *“O Muhammad, we do not say that you are telling a lie. So far as your integrity is concerned, we have no doubt about it.”*

The Prophet is a role model for everyone who believes in his prophethood. Character of this calibre establishes one’s identity in the eyes of both God and the people. But such a character is not the sole privilege of a prophet. Every single believer can have such a character and is certainly expected to emulate the character of the Prophet.

You are known to your neighbours by your character and not by anything else.

The Prophet’s veracity was almost a byword in Makkah. The following is a portion of a dialogue between the Christian Emperor Heraclius and Abu Sufyan, an opponent of the Prophet at that time:

Emperor Heraclius: *“Did you suspect him of lying before he said what he said?”*

Abu Sufyan: *“No.”*

Emperor Heraclius: *“And does he break his pledges?”*

Abu Sufyan: *“No.”*

Emperor Heraclius: *“If he does not lie to man, then how will he lie to God Almighty?”*

This dialogue shows the sheer strength of a person’s character. Indeed, you are known to your neighbours by your character and not by anything else. □



This World

This world is merciless when it comes to accepting useless excuses, no matter how beautifully you might seek to embellish them.

MOTIVATION IS GREATER THAN FAVOUR

Per Ardua ad Astra

ACCORDING to a survey, out of the world's hundred richest people today, 27 are heirs and 73 are self-made. Of these self-made, 18 have no college degree and 36 are children of poor parents, but some billionaires had neither a degree nor wealthy parents.

In other words, super-achievers are not born, they are self-made people. It is not external favour that makes one a super-achiever, but one's own struggle. Super-achievement is not achieved through inheritance, but is a self-acquired success.

It is a fact that no one is a born billionaire, but it is also a fact that everyone is a potential billionaire. It is the unfolding of one's own potential that makes one a billionaire or super-achiever. Nature does not discriminate between one person and another. Nature's gifts come to everyone on an equal basis. It is the receiver himself who either utilizes them or fails to do so.

The so-called deprived persons are in fact privileged persons. Their state of deprivation serves as an inner motivation. When they see others are progressing, it creates a strong incentive in their minds. It is this incentive that makes man a superman. It inculcates in him a strong urge to be successful.

Their state of deprivation brings about a kind of brainstorming which enhances their inner spirit. They enter the world of competition working to their full capacity. They develop the spirit of do or die. It is this great spirit that leads them to great success.

There is a saying that 'a person was born with a silver spoon in his mouth'. This kind of birth creates a kind of contentment in the concerned person, and contentment is the killer of motivation. While one who was born in a poor family without a silver or golden spoon, develops a kind of discontent. And it is a psychological fact that discontent activates one's mind and triggers a fire within one to do hard work.

You can seldom find a family that started its history with a treasure of gold and diamonds. For every family, the treasure of gold is a phenomenon of the future, not of the present. Every family initially started its history from rags, and not from riches. The story of rags to riches is not the story of some exceptional persons, but is common to

all. In fact, the story of rags to riches is the story of every successful family or successful person.

There are numerous examples of people rising to a high position through their own struggle, while their children turned out to be dull. The reason is very simple. The father started his life with the spirit of discontent, while his children started their lives with the spirit of contentment. It was this reason that was responsible for the difference between father and sons.

A person who is born into a poor family and achieves success by way of struggle achieves an additional thing which is more important than wealth—that is, intellectual development. His circumstances automatically develop an intellectual struggle in his mind. This struggle unfolds his inner capacity, and consequently he emerges as an intellectually developed person.

One who is born in a state of affluence might become intellectually dwarfed, while one who is born in poor circumstances might emerge as an intellectual giant. The laws of nature are greater than everything else. They are eternal: they cannot be changed. The law of nature in this regard tells that it is not ease but effort, not facility but difficulty that makes men. □

Nature does not discriminate between one person and another. Nature's gifts come to everyone on an equal basis. It is the receiver himself who either utilizes them or fails to do so.



Secret of Reform

God has placed the secret of reform and progress in the silent transformation of individuals, you cannot hope to progress by stirring up agitation and strife.

RATIONAL CHOICE AND EMOTIONAL CHOICE

Between Peace & Problems

LIFE is a game of choices. Every moment you have to opt for some choice, either on a rational level or on an emotional level. The rational choice always leads to success, while the emotional choice leads to problems, if not total failure. Opting for the rational choice endows one with peace of mind, while the emotional choice is bound to give rise to second thoughts later in life.

This is due to the law of nature. The law of nature is based on realities; it is not based on anyone's emotions. When a person goes through a situation and takes a decision on a rational basis, he instantly receives the support of the law of nature. However, if a person decides on the basis of his emotions, he does not get the support of the law of nature. It is this difference that creates problems. This law of nature is mentioned in the Quran in these words:

You may dislike something although it is good for you,
or like something although it is bad for you:
God knows but you do not. (2: 216)

The Quran also applies this principle to the issue of marriage. There is a very relevant verse in the Quran in this regard:

If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike something which
God might make a source of abundant good. (4: 19)

Marriage leads to lifetime companionship. Therefore, it is necessary for both partners to be very serious in this matter.

As soon as one decides to get married, one faces the moment of either making a rational choice or an emotional choice. Marriage leads to lifetime companionship. Therefore, it is necessary for both partners to be very serious in this matter. They must take into consideration the long-term benefits, rather than short-term gains. Both should make a rational decision and not an emotional decision.

There is, however, a problem. The time for marriage always comes when both partners are in their age of immaturity and have little experience of real life. At this stage, they are not in a position to take a decision on purely objective basis.

Then what should be done? The Quran gives a very practical criterion for making a decision in this matter. One who keeps in mind this practical criterion will ensure that their married life is a success. Those who fail to follow this criterion take the risk of turning their marriage into a problematic marriage.

The Quranic criterion in this regard is: Don't follow your desires, follow your reason. Those who are governed by their desire only see the appearance, or take things at face-value. But, being governed by reason makes one reach the depth of the matter. Reason follows reality and decides by seeing the future rather than the present. Due to this difference, an emotional judgment creates problems, while a rational judgment always leads to success.

For example, if at the time of marriage one focuses only on the outward appearance and chooses a fashionable spouse, then it might bring with it a culture of entertainment, shopping, and fashionable living. This choice causes a shift of focus by giving importance to superficial activities such as excessive expenditure on materialistic things, engaging in entertainment and dissipation, and leading a fashionable lifestyle.

Making an emotional choice in marriage may give one temporary pleasure, but in the long run it is bound to turn into a life of problems.

In contrast to the above, if one's choice is based on the merits of the individual, the focus at home will be quite different. Importance will be given to serious discussion, intellectual development, simple living, right use of money and energy and concentrating on deeper aspects of things rather than on their superficial aspects. The difference between these two different choices is bound to create two kinds of future. The first choice may lead to a life full of unending problems. On the contrary, the second choice might lead to a successful life.

Making an emotional choice in marriage may give one temporary pleasure, but in the long run it is bound to turn into a life of problems. Whereas a rational choice in this regard may seem to be a hard choice in the beginning, however in the long run it will result in a good life for both the partners.

An emotional choice in marriage promotes materialism at home, on the other hand, a rational choice in marriage promotes a healthy environment and fosters constructive activities at home, as both partners embark on building a bright future for themselves and their children. □

THE COMFORT ZONE

No Challenge Zone

ONE'S comfort zone is a situation in which one feels safe or at ease. This phenomenon is very common. Almost every person experiences this at sometime or the other. But a comfort zone is not based on reality. It is only a psychological state which may be interpreted as a comfort zone.

For example, before marriage, one lives with their biological relatives. These gradually become comfort zones for them. But, after marriage, they have to live in a relationship arising outside of blood ties. This becomes, unconsciously if not consciously, a non-comfort zone for both of them. But there is no real reason for this to be so, for it is only the perception from the psychological point of view. If the man and woman understand this fact, they will regard their situation as an issue of management and not of reaction.

A comfort zone may have everything, but staying in it cannot stimulate intellectual development. Living in a comfort zone does not give you the ability to face challenges.

The same is true of companies. Often when employees stay in one place over a long period of time, their place of work becomes their comfort zone and they do not feel inclined to move out of it. But again, this is purely a psychological state, and there is no real reason for them to have this feeling.

Your comfort zone may seem comfortable to you, but it is only a result of your way of thinking. If you change your conditioned thinking, every 'zone' will become a comfort zone for you. The so-called comfort zone is a challenge-free zone. Within it, there is

apparently peace, but because of the absence of challenges, you cease to have new experiences. Thus you are unable to develop intellectually or engage in creative thinking. There is the danger in this state of affairs of your becoming a victim of intellectual dwarfism.

On the contrary, if you give no importance to being in a comfort zone and are prepared to face any new zone, the result will be that you will have new experiences every time and shall have to face different challenges at every turn. By facing these new situations, you will develop the ability to think creatively.

A comfort zone may have everything, but staying in it cannot stimulate intellectual development. Living in a comfort zone does not give you the ability to face challenges. A comfort zone is only a beautiful name for a non-creative zone.

The Scottish writer Samuel Smiles has said in his book *Self- Help*:

It is not ease but effort, not facility but difficulty that makes man.

Difficulties make a person energetic. Where there is no difficulty, a person gradually ends up becoming dull.

It is not good, however, to jump out of your comfort zone simply out of ambition. This may prove to be a misadventure. But if circumstances require a change, do not be reluctant to accept it. Rather, admit it as a circumstantial gift. Facing changes with courage and wisdom inevitably pays off.

A comfort zone is a self-created world. You create this world under the influence of your emotions and not by applying your rational faculty. It is a fact that all the successes of history are the outcome not of emotion but of reason. □



Culture of Violence

The greatest disadvantage of the culture of violence is that those who engage in it begin to live on the defensive—to the extent that they believe that they are living under siege. A mindset of this kind hampers creative thinking and leads to stagnation.

This loss is so huge that there is no justification for continuing to perpetrate violence, even for a single moment.

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



THE NEXT WORLD

A SCENE of the Day of Judgment has been described in the Quran thus: *“On the Day when the truth shall be laid bare, they will be called upon to prostrate themselves, but they will not be able to do so.”* (68: 42). Here, the phrase ‘truth shall be laid bare’ means that all those facts which are hidden in the present world will come to light on the Day of Judgment. These facts or truths are veiled in this world because our life here is meant for testing us. According to Abdullah ibn Abbas, this verse of the Quran informs us about the Day when every matter shall become plainly evident and all of one’s deeds will be disclosed.

A person who adopts a religious life solely for the purpose of showing off to others or for the sake of one’s personal interest is guilty of false religiosity. However, in this world this fact about him remains hidden from others. This is why here a person who is not truly religious receives the same respect as should be accorded to the one who is sincere in following religion. But such fakery and pretence cannot be passed off as truth in the world to come after death. In the next world, such people will find themselves utterly helpless.

Similarly, those who speak deceitful words to acquire acceptance among people will find no words to utter in the life to come. This is because in the Hereafter only sincere and truthful speech will be given value. People who, in this world, achieve fame on the basis of material wealth will be humbled in the next world, as there only spiritual attainment will be of significance. All other non-spiritual achievements will be divested of glory. Those, who today are in the habit of gathering crowds around them by raising slogans about non-issues will realize after death that they are without any supporter. On the Day of Judgment, people will pay attention to only those issues which have importance in the true sense of the word.

In this world, people often disregard the truth to reach great heights, but in the world Hereafter only those who acknowledged the truth will be bestowed positions of eminence. The present world is such that a person is able to amass great wealth by dishonest means, but in the world to come only uprightness and honesty will make a person competent for anything.

People, in the present world, work hard to please others to achieve their own interests. But on the Day of Judgment, only that person will be held deserving of rewards who had made effort in this world to please God. □

The present world is such that a person is able to amass great wealth by dishonest means, but in the world to come only uprightness and honesty will make a person competent for anything.



Provocation

If someone seeks to provoke you, you should not allow yourself to get provoked. If someone conspires against you, you should render the conspiracy ineffective through wisdom and silent positive action.

TOWARDS GLOBAL PEACE

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



PEACE IN THE QURAN

THE Quran is undoubtedly a book of peace. It is not a book of war and violence. This can be judged from the fact that all of the Quran's pronouncements are directly or indirectly related to peace. Its opening invocation is: *"In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful"*, and this verse has been repeated in the Quran no less than 114 times. This is an indication that the greatest attribute of the Supreme Being who sent this book to mankind is mercy. Indeed, the theme of this entire holy book is God's all-embracing compassion.

The greater part of the scriptures, directly or indirectly, strongly advocates peace. Of the 6,666 verses of the Quran, there are hardly forty verses, that is, less than one percent of the book, which deal with the injunction to wage war, and that too only in self-defence.

Those who accept the Quran as the Book of God will be regarded as true believers only when they follow its admonitions and become peace-loving in the full sense of the word. Under no circumstances, should they launch themselves on violent courses of action. In order to conduct an objective study of this subject, it is necessary to differentiate between Islam and Muslims. Muslim action should not necessarily be seen as deriving from the teachings of Islam. In effect, Muslim practices ought to be judged by the criteria of Islam—which is an ideology—rather than Islam be judged by Muslim practices. Those who have abandoned the teachings of Islam can have no claim to be Islamic in their conduct, even if by their own rights they regard themselves as champions of Islam. Muslims are Muslims only when they follow the basic teachings of their religion.

Peace is God's Name

The Quran puts on record the many names or attributes of God, one of them being *As-Salam*, that is, Peace. God loves peace and security so much that He chose Peace as one of His names. That is to say, that God Himself is the embodiment of peace.

Al-Qurtubi, has explained this verse in these words:

God is the Being from Whom all people feel safe and secure.
From Whom people have the experience only of peace, not of
violence.

God has set the highest conceivable standards. When God's dealings with human beings are based on peace and security, then man should also deal with other human beings in a peaceable manner, and not with harshness or violence.

No Extremism

In the fourth chapter of the Quran the following injunction has been given:

Do not go to extremes in your religion. (4: 171)

The same point has been made in a *Hadith*. The Prophet of Islam observed:

You should restrain yourselves from committing excesses (*ghulu*) in religion, for it was due to their having gone to extremes in religion that the previous communities were destroyed. (*Al-Nasai, Ibn Majah, Musnad Ahmad*)

Ghulu means extremism. The way of extremism is wrong, whatever the circumstances, for it goes against the spirit of religion. Indeed, it is proneness to extremism which at times culminates in war and violence. Those who have extremist tendencies remain dissatisfied with the path of moderation, since this strikes them as being far from the ideal. That is why they so easily incline towards violence, and are ever ready to open hostilities in the name of achieving their objectives.

***Muslim practices
ought to be judged
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by Muslim practices.***

Moderation, which is the opposite of extremism, is closely interlinked with peace. When people possess the virtue of moderation, they

necessarily think in terms of peace and will engage in their struggle in a peaceful manner. Where there is moderation there is peace, and vice versa.

In stark contrast to this, an extremist attitude very soon leads to confrontation and violence. Extremism and violence are obviously interconnected. That is why extremism is held in religion to be abhorrent. It would not be wrong to say that violence is another name for extremism and that moderation is to refrain from extremism.

Killing One Human Being is Like Killing all Mankind

The Quran states:

Whoever kills a human being, except as a punishment for murder or for spreading corruption in the land, shall be regarded as having killed all mankind. (5: 32)

Murder is a horrendous act. The killing of a human being is permissible only when the danger he poses to social peace has no other remedy.

God's dealings with human beings are based on peace and security, then man should also deal with other human beings in a peaceable manner, and not with harshness or violence.

Killing a single person without proven justification is equal to killing all human beings. The difference between the two is only one of degree and not in nature. Killing one human being is just as horrendous as killing all human beings. Such a killing, without proper sanction, appears to be a simple matter. But such an act breaks all traditions of respect for life.

The above verse of the Quran shows the great importance of peace and security in Islam. If someone is unjustly killed, Islam demands that the whole of society should become so greatly agitated over this offence that it

should work united towards restoring a state of peace and security. It should be treated as a matter of the greatest urgency, as if all of humanity were under attack.

Extinguishing the Fire of Violence

The Quran states:

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

This verse of the Quran shows the creation plan of the Creator for this world—a plan based on the principle of peace. This means that

whenever one of two opposing sides is intent on fuelling the fire of war, the other should attempt to extinguish it by resorting to some peaceful strategy, so that violence may be prevented from spreading. It should never happen that if one side indulges in violence, the other follows suit. The proper and most desirable way of leading one's life in this world is not to counter bombs with bombs, but rather to defuse them. And this should be done at the very outset. If we are imbued with the true spirit of Quranic teaching, we should realize that countering a bomb with another bomb is the way of Satan. On the contrary, the way approved of by God is to neutralize the bomb.

It is but natural for any given society to have to face distasteful situations. No group of human beings can ever be totally free from untoward happenings in their midst. This being so, the actual solution to the problem lies not in putting an end to the unpleasantness itself, but rather in refraining from aggravating matters, which inevitably happens if one kind of unpleasantness is met with another. By refraining from violence, the baneful influence of social friction can be checked from spreading. There is no other possible solution.

Moderation, which is the opposite of extremism, is closely interlinked with peace. When people possess the virtue of moderation, they necessarily think in terms of peace and will engage in their struggle in a peaceful manner.

War only for Defence

The Quran states:

Permission to fight is granted to those who are attacked because they have been wronged. (22: 39)

This is not just a Quranic injunction aimed at Islamic believers, but rather a statement of international law. The above verse clearly states that war is permissible only when, in order to counter open aggression, it is waged in self-defence. All other forms of war come under the heading of aggression. And aggressors have no lawful place in this world. According to this verse, there is no justification for any war other than a defensive one, when one is compelled to do.

According to the Quran, even defensive war can be fought only after a formal declaration of war has been made, and only by an established government. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have no right to wage war on any pretext. In view of these teachings, we can safely

conclude that according to the laws of war stated in the Quran, all wars, except for a defensive war which has become unavoidable, are unlawful. For instance, guerrilla war, proxy war, undeclared war and aggressive war, are all undoubtedly unlawful in Islam.

War, in fact, is a bestial act. There is nothing human about it. Indeed, according to known and specific principles of Islam, peace is the rule, while war is only a rare exception.

Peace is something that can be opted for in all circumstances, whereas the decision to wage war should be taken only in times of emergencies for the purpose of defence, when it becomes inevitable, and that too at a time when all peaceful strategies for avoiding confrontation have failed.

Peaceful Persuasion, not Coercion

On the subject of *jihad*, the Quran addresses the believers thus:

Do great *jihad* with the help of the Quran. (25: 52)

Jihad in Islam entails only the kind of peaceful struggle which has nothing to do with violence. The Arabic word jihad is derived from the root juhd which means to strive, to struggle, that is, to exert oneself to the utmost to achieve one's goal.

As we know, the Quran is a book, an ideological book. It is not a gun or a sword. Therefore, *jihad* by means of the Quran can only mean conveying the ideas of the Quran to the people. This implies that we should struggle peacefully to make the ideas of the Quran understandable by presenting them in the form of logical arguments.

The above-mentioned verse makes it clear that what is called *jihad* in Islam entails only the kind of peaceful struggle which has nothing to do with violence. The Arabic word *jihad* is derived from the root *juhd* which means to strive, to struggle, that is, to exert oneself to the utmost to achieve one's goal.

This is the original meaning of *jihad* in Arabic.

This verse shows that peaceful effort is vastly superior to violent effort. Whenever one opts for the violent method, the sphere of one's efforts becomes very limited. In resorting to violence, only the sword and the gun are of avail, whereas by peaceful methods, all kinds of things may be utilized to achieve our objective. Even a pen of the scholar can serve a great purpose.

Adhering to the Truth with Patience and Perseverance

The Quran tells us that the kind of people who can save themselves from loss and achieve a successful life are those “who exhort each other to justice and to fortitude.” (103: 3)

It is unfortunate that one who adheres to the path of truth himself, or calls upon people to accept the truth is almost invariably rejected by the people. The resistance he has to face is very great. At such times what the lover of truth should do is exercise great patience. He should bear with fortitude all hardships, without trying to hold others responsible for it.

Patience is another name for the non-aggressive method. One who stands up for the truth ought not to counter violence with violence. He must unilaterally adhere to peaceful ways.

Truth and violence cannot exist together. One who wants to opt for truth will have to abandon violence. Violence, whatever the pretext or justification, is still violence. All forms of violence are equally pernicious, and no elaborate justification of violence can nullify or diminish its destructive consequences. The ultimate weakness of violence is that it begets the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it.

Perpetrating violence in the name of truth is the negation of truth. Those who engage in violence in the name of truth only prove that their case is not that of truth. A lover of truth can never be a lover of violence. One who loves violence is certainly not a lover of truth, whether or not he regards himself as a champion of the truth.

Truth and violence cannot exist together. One who wants to opt for truth will have to abandon violence. Violence, whatever the pretext or justification, is still violence.

Adopting the Course of Reconciliation

During the times of the Prophet of Islam, as a result of the aggression of his opponents among the Quraysh, a state of war prevailed between the Quraysh and the Muslims. One of the commandments given in the Quran on this occasion was:

Then if they should be inclined to make peace, make peace with them, and put your trust in God. Surely, it is He who is All Hearing and All Knowing. Should they seek to deceive you, God is enough for you. (8: 61-62)

This verse of the Quran shows that peace is desirable in Islam to the greatest possible extent. Even if peace can be established only by incurring risks, this course should unhesitatingly be embarked upon in the way enjoined by the Quran. If reconciliatory offers are made by the antagonists in the course of the war, they should be accepted without delay. Even supposing that there is the fear of some deception in the making of the offer of peace, this offer should nevertheless be accepted in the hopes that God will always be on the side of the peace lovers and not on that of the deceivers.

The ultimate weakness of violence is that it begets the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it.

Another reality that emerges is that, in this world, peace can be established only by those who have great courage. In the present world, problems inevitably arise between different groups, for no human situation is ever absolutely ideal. Everyone at some point

in his life is faced with injustice and the misappropriation of what belongs to him by right. In these situations, only such individuals can establish peace who can rise above all considerations and disdain all pretexts to engage in violent retaliation. Only the truly courageous can establish peace in this world. Those who are lacking in courage will continue to fight, and will thus never allow the history of the world to be re-written in terms of blessed peace.

No Corruption on this Earth

In the following verse, the Quran alludes to a particular kind of character, the self-styled reformer:

When they are told, Do not cause corruption in the land,
they say, We are only promoters of peace. (2: 11)

This refers to those who claim to be engaged in reform work, but whose method is of the wrong kind, for their actions result in corruption and perversion. Here the word 'corruption' (*fasad*) means that their activities result in clash and confrontation with others, so that mutual hatred is generated. In the process morality is undermined and a negative mind-set prevails. All these factors are referred to as spreading corruption on the earth, for they all destroy social peace, and ultimately, members of society are eternally at loggerheads with each other.

This teaching of the Quran shows that it is not enough for an action to have a good goal to be right. The kind of side effects produced by

activities launched in the name of reform must also be examined. If these activities themselves produce tension and conflict—in spite of their goal being the laudable one of reformation—they would be regarded as spreading corruption. The doers will be deemed criminals and not reformers or servants of humanity.

No reform work is truly such, unless it is confined to the sphere of peace and humanitarianism. Any work, even if it is carried out in the name of reform, is to be condemned if it disturbs the peace, or worse, results in the loss of lives or the destruction of property. The task of reform should result in reform. If it results in social upheaval (*fasad*) then this reform movement is in itself a form of societal perversion, irrespective of whatever fine words we may find to describe it.

The Greater Provision

A principle of life has been thus stated in the Quran:

Do not regard with envy the worldly benefits We have given some of them, for with these We seek only to test them. The provision of your Lord is better and more lasting. (20: 131)

The truth is that there are two very different ways of living one's life. The first is entirely directed towards the material world. One who seeks success in terms of worldly wealth and honour will find that there is no end to his ambition. For if he sets purely worldly goals before him, he will always find that there are people around him who have more than he has. There is no escaping these disparities. Therefore, one who lives for material things suffers a perpetual sense of deprivation. This produces feelings of discontent and jealousy, which surface again and again in the form of rivalry, revenge and the accompanying violence.

The second way for the individual is to lead his life with a sense of achievement. Such a person will be content with himself. This feeling of achievement will prevent him from nurturing hatred against others or engaging in violence. Who are those who are blessed with this feeling? In the words of the Quran, they are those who are the recipients of God's provision. God's provision means the conviction of having discovered the truth: that they have been blessed by their Creator is more precious than all the world's

Only the truly courageous can establish peace in this world. Those who are lacking in courage will continue to fight, and will thus never allow the history of the world to be re-written in terms of blessed peace.

treasures of gold and silver. Each individual should, therefore, lead his life with a keen awareness that the source of his intellectual and spiritual nourishment is the entire universe.

One who becomes a recipient of God's provision in this world rises so high that material things like wealth and power become insignificant to him. This psychology of its own turns him into a peace-loving person. Hatred and violence appear to him so meaningless that he has no time for such negative emotions or for making plans to engage in violence. One who has found something greater can never seriously pursue something smaller. He would therefore never engage in violence.

The Prompt Silencing of Complaints

The complaining mentality is an aggressive one, which stifles positive thinking. It is the resultant negative thought which is undoubtedly the root cause of all evil. In most cases, it gives rise to the permanent sense of grievance, real or imaginary, which underlies any violence which takes place.

The truth is that all the teachings of Islam are based, directly or indirectly, on the principle of peace. While all Islamic objectives may be achieved in a peaceful atmosphere, there are no Islamic objectives which may be achieved in a violent atmosphere.

The creation plan in this present world has been devised in such a manner that there is no escape from grievances. This being so, the moment the thought of complaining first takes shape in the mind, it should be immediately dismissed. The complaint, if constantly recalled or revived, becomes so entrenched in the memory that it can never be thrust aside. In such a situation, wisdom lies in nipping complaints in the bud. Failing this, complaining will gradually become a permanent part of one's psyche, and then one's thinking will acquire a negative character. Others will appear as enemies. Given a chance, the complainant will not then

hesitate to engage in violence against the targets of his complaints, even if he himself suffers in consequence.

What is the formula for putting an end to complaints at the very outset? It is to give serious thought to the following verse of the Quran:

Whatever misfortune befalls you is of your own doing. (42: 30)

This means whenever we have any cause for complaint against anyone, we should direct it first at ourselves. We should try to explain it in such

a way that the blame falls upon us. When we come to understand that we, rather than others, have made some mistake, we shall then set about rectifying our own shortcomings, than wasting time in making protests and complaints against some supposed enemy.

A Mercy for Mankind

The Quran has the following to say of the Prophet of Islam:

We have sent you forth as a mercy to all mankind. (21: 107)

The advent of the Prophet of Islam made manifest God's mercy for all mankind. Through him God communicated those principles of life by opting for which man may inhabit the abode of eternal peace and security (*Dar-as-Salaam*) (10: 25). Through him, such teachings were revealed as would turn human society into a peaceful society. For the first time in history, the Prophet of Islam presented a complete ideology based on the concept of peace. He gave us the principle for the building of a healthy life, by shunning hatred and violence. Through him a revolution was set in motion, which made it possible to construct a peaceful society by avoiding war and confrontation.

Although the Prophet of Islam was compelled to wage several battles, they were so brief that we might describe them as skirmishes rather than full-scale war. It would be quite correct to say that the Prophet of Islam initiated a revolution which, although very great in its scope and repercussions, was nevertheless almost bloodless. He gave peace the status of a complete ideology or system of life. He impressed it upon his followers that violence was the way of destruction, while peace was the way of construction. He held patience to be the greatest form of worship, implying as it does adherence to the path of peace in the full sense of the word. He held disturbing the peaceful system of nature to be the greatest crime (*fasad*).

The Prophet enjoined believers to greet one another by saying *Assalamu Alaykum* (peace be on you). This shows that mutual relationships should be based on peace and security. The Prophet told the believers that success in the Hereafter should be the target of the human struggle. In this way he dispelled the notion that worldly progress should be one's aim in life, for that is what ultimately results in all kinds of confrontation and violence. His principle for better living was to make oneself useful to others, and if that was not possible, then at least not to harm others; no one should be regarded as an enemy; even the enemy must be given fair treatment, for only then would the realization come that one's enemy was potentially one's friend: the 'enemy' always has it in him to be a friend.

Self-evident Proof

It is no exaggeration to say that Islam and violence are contradictory to each other. The concept of Islamic violence is so obviously unfounded that, *prima facie*, it stands rejected. The fact that violence is not sustainable in the present world is enough to demonstrate that violence as a principle is quite alien to the scheme of things in Islam. Islam claims to be an eternal religion and, as such, it cannot afford to have a principle in its scheme which at any time could be found unsustainable. Any attempt to bracket violence with Islam amounts to casting doubt upon the universal message of the Islamic religion.

A phrase like 'Islamic violence' is the same kind of contradiction in terms as 'pacifistic terrorism'. The truth is that all the teachings of Islam are based, directly or indirectly, on the principle of peace. While all Islamic objectives may be achieved in a peaceful atmosphere, there are no Islamic objectives which may be achieved in a violent atmosphere. □



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DISCRIMINATION IS ALIEN TO THE QURAN

Differences are Healthy

DISCRIMINATION of any kind is quite alien to the scheme of things in the Quran. In the chapter *Al-Hujurat* (The Apartments), the Quran declares that all men and women are equal before God. The translation of the relevant verse is as follows:

Mankind! We have created you from a male and female, and made you into peoples and tribes, so that you might come to know each other. The noblest of you in God's sight is the one who fears God most. God is all-knowing and all-aware. (49: 13)

There are obvious differences between people in terms of colour, race, economic status, etc., but according to the Quran, the difference is simply a difference: it cannot be used as a basis for discrimination.

God Almighty created man with different attributes, difference being a part of creation. Differences exist for practical rather than theoretical reasons. Their main purpose is to enable people to recognize and distinguish one from another.

In other words, differences among people are a healthy sign. It is due to these differences that we recognize each other and carry out our dealings on this basis. If there were to be complete uniformity—with all human beings cast in exactly the same mould—then it would be very difficult to live in society in a normal manner.

It is a fact that difference is a part of nature. But if we were to take difference in the sense of discrimination, that would be an unhealthy sign and would disturb the normalcy of society. So we have to learn the art of difference management, rather than look upon differences in any negative sense.

Then there are other benefits of difference, due to which people take up a variety of jobs, entering different fields of activity. Difference provides the basis for the division of labour, a principle which is very important for the comprehensive development of any society.

According to the divine scheme, honour is based on merit and not on any kind of external features. The Prophet of Islam once said that, before God, red and white, black and brown, were all equal. He said:

Behold, God has removed from you the arrogance of pagan ignorance (*jahiliyyah*) with its boast of ancestral glories. Man is but a God-conscious believer or an unfortunate sinner. All people are children of Adam, and Adam was created out of dust.

There may be differences in colour or physical features, but man is what he is in his inner being and, in this sense, everyone has the same potential. Everyone is born with the same inner qualities, so one who discovers himself and tries to turn his potential into a reality is the one who will be successful.

Everyone is born with the same inner qualities, so one who discovers himself and tries to turn his potential into a reality is the one who will be successful.

You are not what others think you are: you are what you prove yourself to be. Everyone has the capacity to become a self-made man. Everyone has the capacity to dispel others' misunderstandings about him, and the Creator expects you to make use of this capacity. God has not shown any discrimination between different people. It is people themselves who give others the chance to discriminate against them. □



Introspection

The troubles that people face at the hands of others are intended to make them engage in introspection. But false leaders quickly convert them into an excuse for condemning others.

THE MODERN SCIENCE OF THEOLOGY

Based on Rationality

MODERN theological science is a substantiation of religious dogmas with due regard for contemporary intellect; or a presentation of Islamic teachings according to modern rational methods. First of all, we must ascertain exactly what this contemporary intellect is. Contemporary intellect is synonymous with scientific intellect, or that intellect which emphasizes the importance of the essential nature of things. The scientific revolution has had a profound effect on human thought due to the reason that scientific theories are required to be based on experiment and observation rather than on hypothesis and analogy.

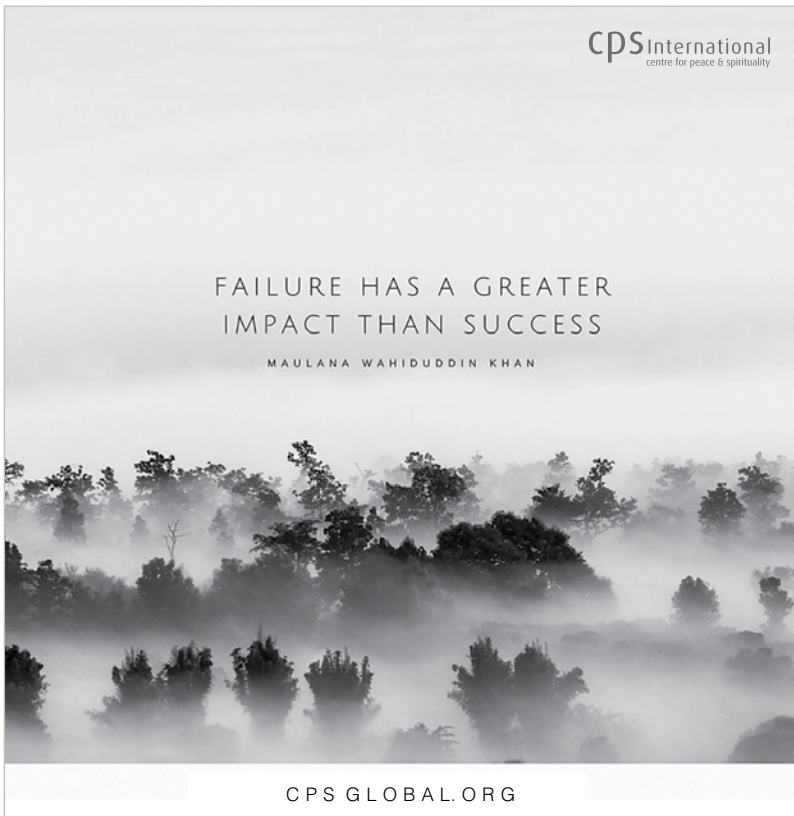
The upheaval of the present age has occurred because of the discovery of the realities of nature. All things, from the bicycle to the aeroplane, from light bulbs to huge factories, operate on the basis of these natural realities. This is the revolution which has, in fact, stolen the limelight in our modern age, for it has affected every department of human life, and has likewise altered modes of speech. For thousands of years man was engaged in a futile attempt to turn iron into gold by means of highly secret formulas. Now, thanks to the discovery of natural realities iron is converted into machines more precious than gold. Since the progress of modern man has been due to his discovery of realities, he is bound to attribute importance only to that theory which is supported by these realities.

The scientific revolution has had a profound effect on human thought due to the reason that scientific theories are required to be based on experiment and observation rather than on hypothesis and analogy.

This difference between the modern and ancient intellect may be understood by means of a simple example. Some fifty years ago such terms as "family prescription", "hereditary cure", "royally mixed medicine" etc., used to carry great weight with physicians. If any of these terms were used with respect to any medicines, it meant that it contained hidden properties. Nowadays, however, these terms have no value. Today's doctor will not use this outdated terminology when explaining the efficacy of a certain medicine. Rather he will point out that this product has been prepared scientifically and that its advantages have been ascertained by means of established

evidence and experiments, the validity of which can always be tested by repetition.

The very phrase “family cure” implies that its medicinal properties are not open to general investigation and that the connection between illness and cure has not been ascertained by any specific experiments. Rather its acceptability is attributable to its wide usage over a long period of time. Today’s customer seeks that product which has been manufactured on scientific lines. Likewise it is only those ideas whose truth is verified by natural realities that he is ready to accept. □



CONQUERING DEATH

Preparation only Possibility

LOUIS XI (1423-1483), the king of France, ruled the country for a period of 23 years, from 1461-83. His reign had been a long one, but death was the last word that he would allow to be uttered in his presence. He did not want to die. During the last days of his life he went into seclusion in an enclosed fort where only selected people could enter. Around the fort a deep trench was dug so that no one could gain access to it. All twenty-four hours, forty archers remained on duty, and forty horsemen patrolled the fort day and night. Whoever was seen making any unauthorized effort to enter the fort was arrested and executed on the spot. All kinds of luxuries were provided inside the fort so that the king would never become melancholic.

Louis XI was so eager to live as long as possible that he had given orders that the word 'death' should never be uttered before him. An expert doctor attended on him round the clock. This doctor drew a monthly salary of 10,000 gold crowns. In those days in Europe no military officer earned such a salary, even with several years of experience.

However, none of these precautions saved the king from weakness and old age. During his final days, he became so weak that he could hardly pick up his food and put it in his mouth by himself. But his will to live was indomitable. When he was told that tortoises lived for 500 years due to their possessing some life-giving properties, he dispatched three ships to Germany and Italy to bring them for him, in huge quantities. These tortoises were then kept in a big pond near him so that they might pass on the gift of life to him.

Finally, paralysis attacked him on 30th August 1483; death at last conquered him. The last words uttered by him were: "I am not as ill as you people suppose."

All his efforts went in vain. Finally the king of France had learnt that no one could conquer death. □



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THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures

The Quran is the book of God. It has been preserved in its entirety since its revelation to the Prophet of Islam between 610 and 632 AD. It is a book that brings glad tidings to 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**

We have not sent the Quran down to you to distress you, but only as an exhortation for him who fears God; it is a revelation from Him who has created the earth and the high heavens, the All Merciful settled on the throne. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth, and whatever lies in between them, and all that lies under the ground. (20: 2-6)

The Quran is a reminder of the call to the Truth, but its full impact is felt only when the caller himself is fully dedicated to the cause of God, having sacrificed his own interests thereto. If he is to bring people to the right path, he must be seen to put others' welfare before his own, even if this brings him toil and trouble.

But no matter how perfect the presentation of the call to the Truth may be, only those will receive guidance from it who are capable of recognizing and appreciating the truth, and for whom the reasoned argument alone is enough to open their eyes. The August Being, who created the universe, has Himself revealed the Quran. Therefore, there is no contradiction between the Quran and nature. The Quran is a reminder of the truth. But its impact can only be commensurate with the ability—already innate in human nature—to recognize the truth.

Whether you speak aloud [or in a low voice], He hears all, for He knows your secrets and what is even more hidden. God, there is no deity but Him. His are the most excellent names. (20: 7-8)

In this world, on the one hand, there are those whose creed is to compromise on their principles for the sake of their worldly interests and, on the other hand, there are the few who call people to the Truth and whose creed is based on remaining inconsonance with God. The first group readily finds in its surroundings friends and supporters,

and does not feel isolated. In contrast to this, those who give the call to the Truth stand apart, but on the firm foundation of God who is beyond the vision of mortal eyes.

Time and again the preacher becomes uneasy due to the disturbing nature of the prevailing conditions. Often he turns towards his God with prayers in his heart, and sometimes the words of prayer escape from his lips loud and clear in articulate form. To all appearances it seems that in this populous world, he is all alone and that there is nobody who is his friend or supporter.

But this is a matter of outward appearance. In reality, the preacher who gives a call to the Truth, stands on the firmest ground, because he calls for the support of God, who is aware not only of the prayers uttered in solitude but also of the whispering of the heart; such a preacher seeks to make that Being (God) his supporter who possesses all the imaginable and unimaginable powers that are required for giving any one assistance. □



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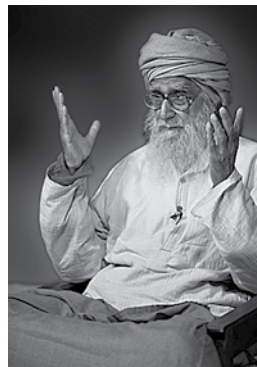
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ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered



Q&A on Anti-Muslim Sentiments

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

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

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

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

Objective analysis tells us that such instances that you cite are certainly not discrimination. Rather, they are a result of Muslims' own doubtful behaviour. Muslims are themselves responsible for this discrimination. According to a Hadith, the Prophet said: "Save yourself from being regarded as objectionable." Because Muslims do not outrightly disown the actions of those Muslims who are engaged in wrong actions, the entire community will face 'discrimination'. If Muslims were to clearly condemn the actions of those who are doing wrong, then, only those specific persons who are guilty of the wrong would face the above kind of response, which is termed 'discrimination' or 'anti-Muslim sentiment'.

Some Muslims may respond to displays of anti-Muslim sentiment by protesting against them and denouncing what they say is discrimination against them. What do you think of this approach to countering or overcoming anti-Muslim sentiments?

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

Such instances of discrimination as you have cited in your question happen on a regular basis with secular persons, but the rest of the secular world does not look at it as a matter of the "secular community". In the secular world, each person is looked upon as distinct. There is no "*secular ummah*". So, when such cases happen with secular persons, the sentiments of secular people do not get hurt, because secular people do not regard themselves as a single community. They regard this as a problem pertaining to those specific individuals. But when such cases happen with Muslims, the sentiments of the entire Muslim community get hurt. What happens with one Muslim affects the whole of the Muslim community. This is why when one Muslim performs a wrong action, the world begins to doubt other Muslims too. In order to avoid this, either Muslims should very strongly condemn those individual Muslims among them who are doing wrong, or, if not this, they should abandon the concept of the *ummah*: that is, every Muslim's case is his own and what he does has nothing to do with other Muslims.

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

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

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

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

What is the right approach to improve relations between Muslims and others in the present circumstances of violence perpetrated in the name of Islam?

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



Reaction

Instant reaction to problematic situations serves only to add new problems to the existing ones. Reaction unleashes an unending chain of action and reaction. The results of such a behaviour is disastrous.

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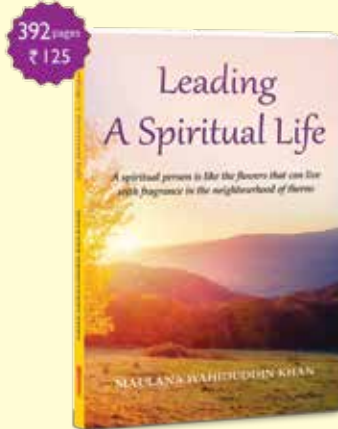
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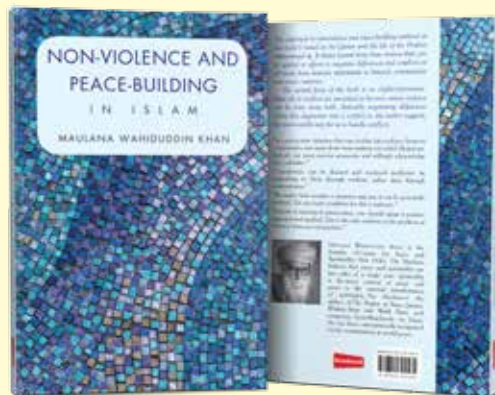
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