

# SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



Don't let any loss make you lose your peace of mind.

# ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

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

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

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

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

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



# SPIRIT OF ISLAM

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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

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**CHIEF EDITOR**

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN  
[www.facebook.com/maulanawkhan](http://www.facebook.com/maulanawkhan)

**EDITORIAL DIRECTOR**

PROF. FARIDA KHANAM

**EDITORIAL COMMITTEE**

DR. NAGHMA SIDDIQI  
MARIA KHAN  
PROF. ZAHEERUDDIN  
AIJAZ AHMED  
MOHAMMAD USMAN

**PRINTER AND PUBLISHER**

FATHIMA SARAH

**OFFICE**

SPIRIT OF ISLAM  
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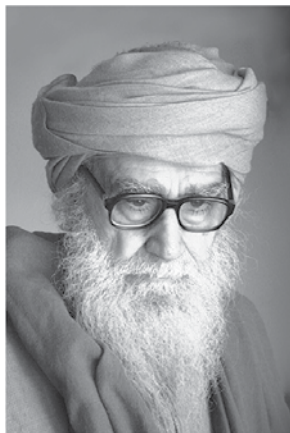
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# CONTENTS

■ FROM MAULANA'S DESK	3
■ FROM THE EDITORIAL DIRECTOR	5
■ HOLLOW SUCCESS	7
■ REVERING THE DEAD, REVILING THE LIVING	8
■ TOWARDS GLOBAL PEACE	9
■ THE SPIRIT OF ISLAM	14
■ FROM THE LIFE OF THE PROPHET	17
■ FROM THE SPIRITUAL TREE	24
■ THE MAKERS OF HISTORY	26
■ THE WONDERS OF CREATION	27
■ FACING MISFORTUNES	28
■ EACH CREATION IS A MIRACLE	29
■ BELIEF IN ANGELS	31
■ LAID-BACK ATTITUDE LEADS TO FAILURE	34
■ THE MISSION OF THE PROPHETS	36
■ THE MIRAGE OF THE GOOD EGG	37
■ APPEARANCE AND REALITY	38
■ NUCLEAR FISSION	41
■ THE BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE	42
■ THE MAKING AND BREAKING OF HISTORY	43
■ THE WORD OF GOD	44
■ ASK MAULANA	46

## FROM MAULANA'S DESK



*Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, born in 1925, in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, is an Islamic spiritual scholar who is well-versed in both classical Islamic learning and modern disciplines. The mission of his life has been the establishment of worldwide peace. He has received the Padma Bhushan, the Demiurgus Peace International Award and Sayyidina Imam Al Hassan Peace award for promoting peace in Muslim societies. He has been called 'Islam's spiritual ambassador to the world' and is recognized as one of its most influential Muslims<sup>1</sup>. 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.*

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## SHIFT OF EMPHASIS

**M**USLIMS vehemently claim to follow truth, yet perversion has set in in Muslim society. They find themselves beset by all problems conceivable. The reason for this phenomenon can be attributed, according to the Quran, to deviation or shift of emphasis, that is, turning the focus from one aspect to the other diametrically opposite aspect.

One form this deviation has taken is the interpretation of commands meant for individuals as if they were meant for people in general. That is, those commands which are addressed specifically to individuals for self-action are taken as being applicable not to the self but to others. For instance, the Quran says: "Proclaim the glory of your Lord; purify your garments; shun uncleanness" (74: 3-5). If this verse is figuratively understood to mean 'cleanse the behaviour of others', its impact on the reader will be entirely opposite. This verse, which aims at improving personal behaviour will, if wrongly interpreted, lead us into launching campaigns against others.

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

***Whatever the expression of the Divine Will, it is addressed first and foremost to the individual. But the revolutionary clerics of modern times have diverted the focus of all commands from the individual to the community.***

The same is true of other commands. Whatever the expression of the Divine Will, it is addressed first and foremost to the individual. But the revolutionary clerics of modern times have diverted the focus of all commands from the individual to the community. This is why, in spite of vigorous action being taken in the name of religion, no improvement of character is in sight.

All kinds of reforms and all kinds of perversions can be summed up in just two short sentences:

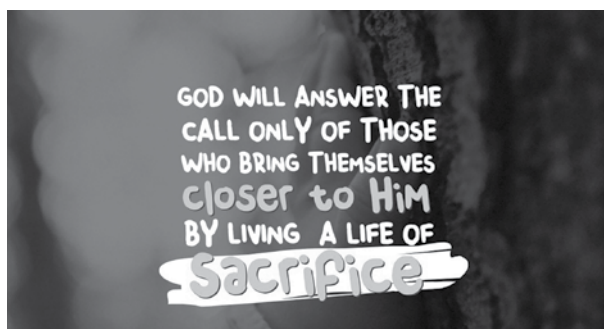
1. God is great, so I am not great.
2. God is great, so you are not great.

The first sentence takes the meaning of *Allah-u-Akbar* in the right sense. But not the second, which is a misrepresentation of Islamic thinking. If you repeat the sentence, 'God is great, therefore I am not great,' this will engender a feeling of responsibility within you, and pride will give way to seriousness and a desire for personal improvement. Humility, which is the root of all good, will then override all other feelings.

On the contrary, if you repeat the second sentence, i.e. 'God is great, therefore, you are not great'; this will beget a psychology of pride which will lead to violent activism and the politics of destruction. It will mean unlimited chaos and perversion in the name of Islam. □

***Maulana Wahiduddin Khan***  
*editor@thespiritofislam.org*

*Follow Maulana at <http://www.speakingtree.in> (The Times of India)*



# FROM THE EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

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

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## HOW CAN YOU BAN AN IDEA?

**I**N 2011, the public prosecutor of Tomsk, Russia, filed a case in a local court seeking a ban on *Bhagvad Gita, As It Is*, with purport by Swami Prabhupada. The prosecutor claimed the book to be "extremist literature" and it might foster social discord and discrimination in the country.

This claim by the prosecutor is strange, to say the least. The first Russian translation of the Gita was published in Russia way back in 1788. It means that the Gita in Russian has been available for more than 200 years. During this long period, there has been no report to suggest the book ever created any problem anywhere in Russian society. Moreover, the prosecutor failed to refer to any new development that suggests the book could become a danger to Russia today.

Even cursory reading of the book by someone will show that the Gita is a book of wisdom. Mahatma Gandhi always used to say that the Gita was his intellectual mother, and that he had derived his ideology of peace from it. And Mahatma Gandhi not only made this claim, but also gave a demonstration of its truth by running Indian politics and freedom movement on the principles of peace and non-violence.

If some people disagree that the Gita is a book of peace, they have every right to. But in an age of freedom, every publisher also has the right to publish the Gita in any language.

Then there is the question of an internationally-accepted principle—that all religious books are holy books and no court has the right to issue an order to ban them. It is beyond the jurisdiction of any court.

That's why on March 21, 2012, the court rejected the prosecutor's petition.

The Gita is an ancient book which Indians have been reading for a very long time, and it has never promoted intolerance in the country, so it is impossible to say that it's a book of intolerance. In fact, those calling for the ban over the Gita are the ones who are intolerant.

***We don't have to agree on everything. But we don't have the option to eliminate differences. What we can do is try to manage the differences.***

Demanding that 'this' or 'that' book should be banned is not a healthy trend. Every book is a source of learning, and to promote learning and understanding, we should encourage the reading of the Gita rather than trying to banish it. Of course, it is naive to believe that a ban can bring an end to the circulation of any book. We don't have to agree on everything. But we don't have the option to eliminate

differences. What we can do is try to manage the differences.

I am a practicing Muslim, and in my personal library there are three editions of the Gita—in Urdu, Hindi and English. These do not pose any threat to me nor have they incited me to threaten others. □

**Dr. Farida Khanam**  
*hub@thespiritofislam.org*

You will not attain *goodness*  
unless you spend for the cause  
of God out of what you cherish

The Quran 3.92



# HOLLOW SUCCESS

*Feed the Body and the Soul*

**M**EN of fortune become subjects of envy to the people around them. They are considered fortunate for having succeeded in achieving worldly power and position. But do those who have managed to come to the top necessarily feel that this is so? Probably not. Wealth is not all that man needs. It can at best serve the needs of the body, leaving the soul to starve. The feeling of something missing disturbs one. They feel as helpless as a common man does. Faced with a vacuum inside—a yawning gap in the soul that has to be filled, one turns to something or the other for a sense of plenitude.

*To know the pains of power, we must go to those who have it; to know its pleasures, we must go to those who are seeking it. —Charles Caleb Colton*

This fact is borne out by an article published in *The Times of India* dated January 1, 1985. In spite of all the luxuries at his command, Mr. Alfred Ford, the owner of the famous Ford Motor Company in the USA felt something missing in his life. His soul was not at rest, it was hankering after something else. In this state, when he was introduced to the Hare Krishna movement, he felt attracted to it as it seemed to answer and satisfy the cravings of his soul. He joined the movement. Afterwards he married a Hindu girl, Sharmila Battacharya who was associated with the movement. The marriage ceremony took place in one of its centres in Australia. On this occasion, a photograph was published in the newspapers where he was seen in seamless clothes. Here is a part of the interview he gave to the AP correspondent:

“I am not a car. I’m a spiritual soul, just like anyone else.” he said. “I’m only a Ford by name.” he further added.

***Wealth is not all that man needs. It can at best serve the needs of the body, leaving the soul to starve.***

No amount of wealth and fortune can supply the needs of the human soul. Material things do not become part of one’s being. Soul cannot rest in things beneath itself. That is why, amidst plenty, one is plagued by loneliness. One is always seeking for something which can compensate this loss, which can fill the inner vacancy, which can become a part of one’s being. Often man is unable to understand this, and goes sadly astray. The only true answer to this quest for a sense of spiritual fulfillment can be found in turning to God, the Lord and Creator of everything. □

# REVERING THE DEAD, REVILING THE LIVING

*Recognize True Worth*

**T**O accord due credit to the living is a sign of intellectual dynamism in people. But the necessary sense of discernment and the ability to evaluate the true value of a human being are all too often lacking in even the most cultured of communities. It is easier, and perhaps safer, to eulogize the dead, even to the point of exalting them far and above their actual worth.

An example of failure to recognize the genuine worth of a living individual is the rejection of Moses as a prophet in the court of Pharaoh. Pharaoh was so against accepting any truth proclaimed by Moses that he said, "Build for me a lofty building so that I may gain access to the heavens, so that I may look upon the God of Moses: I am convinced that he is a liar!" (40: 37). Moses was declared to be a "magician" and an "imposter". (40: 24)

*Tardy, and even posthumous acceptance of true greatness is a commonplace in the annals of history. Undue veneration of the dead to the total disregard of the living is equally a commonplace.*

The people of Mecca behaved no differently in the case of Muhammad. While they felt proud to think of Abraham as the progenitor of their people and used to extol his virtues and revel in his greatness, they spurned Muhammad, denying his prophethood and reviling him to his face. They stopped at nothing to discredit him.

Tardy, and even posthumous acceptance of true greatness is a commonplace in the annals of history. Undue veneration of the dead to the total disregard of the living is equally a commonplace. It is a sad reflection on the powers of discernment of even highly educated societies that this state of affairs should persist.

A society can be labelled as healthy if it recognizes the true potential and worth of its member without reservation and delay. □



# 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.*



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## THE PEACE TREATY OF HUDAIBIYA

**I**N the sixth year of the *Hijrah*, or AD 628, the Prophet, acting on the word of God, set out on a pilgrimage to Makkah along with 1400 Companions. But the Quraysh stopped them at a place called *Hudaibiya*, some eleven kilometres from Makkah. Here the Prophet signed a peace treaty with the Quraysh, which was called by the Quran “a clear victory.” The Treaty provided for ten years of peace between the Quraysh and the Muslims. There was to be no war or treachery between them. The Treaty was concluded with the agreement that the Muslims would not make the pilgrimage that year, but that the following year the Prophet Muhammad and his followers would be free to go to Makkah and stay there for three days.

The terms of the *Hudaibiya* Peace Treaty were as follows:

- that the Muslims would return to Madinah that year without performing the *Umrah* (minor pilgrimage);
- that the pagans would, however, allow them to do so the next year, provided their stay in Makkah did not exceed three days;
- that the Muslims would not bring any arms with them;
- that no Muslim residing in Makkah would migrate to Madinah, but if any migrant in Madinah wished to return to Makkah, he would not be prevented;
- that pagans visiting Madinah would be permitted to return to

Makkah but Muslims visiting Makkah would not be allowed to return;

- that tribes were at liberty to join any of the two contracting parties.

According to this treaty, the Prophet and his Companions left *Hudaibiya* for Madinah. The following year they came again and performed *Umrah* as stipulated by the treaty of *Hudaibiya*.

This incident of *Hudaibiya* embodies a special *Sunnah* of the Prophet, that is, not clashing with others unnecessarily; refraining scrupulously from turning any difficult situation into a prestige issue; rather, taking the problem as it is and keeping oneself free from any complexes which could distort matters; attempting to understand matters by rising above sentiments and emotions, and solving problems wisely by giving concessions to the other party.

***Hudaibiya Peace Treaty embodies a special Sunnah of the Prophet, that is, not clashing with others unnecessarily; refraining scrupulously from turning any difficult situation into a prestige issue.***

When the individual refrains from making a controversial matter into one of prestige, this gives rise to serious thinking. This non-emotional thinking helps him to understand that if he were to walk away from the point of controversy, he would find all other paths open to him. The same was the case in *Hudaibiya*. The Prophet of Islam wanted to enter Makkah, but the Quraysh did not allow him to do so. Yet the Prophet did not let the obstructiveness of the Quraysh become a matter of prestige. His own positive approach enabled him to lead Muslims away from the field of war to the field of *dawah* (the

propagation of Islam), a far vaster arena for their struggle in the cause of Islam.

By unilaterally accepting all the conditions of the opponents of Islam, the Prophet of Islam made a no-war pact called the *Hudaibiya* Peace Treaty. On account of his unconditional acceptance of the opponents' terms, some Muslims held it to be a humiliating pact (*Seerah ibn Hisham*, 36). But after this treaty was finalized, the chapter in the Quran, called 'Victory' (*Al-Fath*) was revealed, in which this peace treaty was hailed as 'a clear victory.' (48: 1)

The reason for this difference in assessment was that human beings looked at it from the angle of the present, while God looked at it from

the angle of the future. It is this reality which has been pointed out in the Quran in these words:

'God knew what you did not know.' (48: 27)

At the outset, the *Hudaibiya* peace treaty appeared to mean nothing but surrender and humiliation. But God saw it from the point of view of its practical result in the future. That is why the Quran called it a clear victory. The well known-disciple of the Companions, Ibn Shihab Az Zuhri, says: "Never before in Islam had there been such a great victory before *Hudaibiya*. Whenever Muslims and non-Muslims met one another before *Hudaibiya*, they came to the point of confrontation. But when peace prevailed and war was stopped under the treaty, people became safe from one another. In this peaceful atmosphere, they interacted with one another and began exchanging their thoughts. After the peace treaty, within a period of two years, many people got attracted towards Islam as had happened before, only over a much longer period of time."

***The reason for failure in life is often traceable to the fact that people become embroiled in controversy. They think that unless all obstacles and hurdles are removed, the onward journey can never be made.***

The *Hudaibiya Sunnah* is the sum total of the actions of the Prophet of Islam, resulting in the 'clear victory' as recorded in the Quran, which led the Islamic movement to the age of revolution and ultimate ascendancy. Consequently, such opportunities were opened up for Islam as had never hitherto presented themselves. The implementation of the *Sunnah Hudaibiya* is, to put it briefly, that problems should be ignored in order to buy time in which to avail of the opportunities.

God has made this world in such a way that, here, according to the Quran, difficulty is always accompanied by ease (Chapter 103). By the law of nature itself, it happens that in this world there are always favourable opportunities alongside problems. By availing of these opportunities, great progress can be made. The reason for failure in life is often traceable to the fact that people become embroiled in controversy. They think that unless all obstacles and hurdles are removed, the onward journey can never be made.

But the *Sunnah* of the Prophet of Islam is totally different. It guides us to refrain from tackling difficulties by confrontational methods. Instead, we must find ways and means of availing of the existing opportunities by avoiding the problems. If necessary, this principle should be observed

to the extent of our being willing to accept the unilateral conditions of opponents, treating them as representing a temporary phase.

The incident that took place in *Hudaibiya* is a specific instance. Apparently, it is regarded as only one of the many such incidents recorded in the Prophet's biography. But, in reality, it is not just one such incident. In fact, the spirit of *Hudaibiya* pervades the entire life of the Prophet. It would not be wrong to say that this was a very well-considered policy of the Prophet, which he adopted throughout his life.

The *Hudaibiya* policy, in fact, is that in any set of circumstances, problems have to be ignored and opportunities, despite all difficulties, have to be availed of. We find a number of examples of this policy in the life of the Prophet. The Prophet followed this same principle in his Makkah as well as the Madinan period. The only difference between *Hudaibiya* and other similar incidents is that on the occasion of *Hudaibiya*, this policy was adopted following a bilateral declaration, while at other times it was followed by a unilateral decision.

***The essence of the Hudaibiya spirit is to completely refrain from entering into any controversy with the other party and to concentrate one's efforts on achieving one's goal in non-controversial fields.***

The method of the Prophet was to study the prevailing sets of circumstances dispassionately and objectively and then follow an appropriate course on his own, without any external pressure. This is what we have called the *Hudaibiya* policy. For instance, in the early phase in Makkah before the *Hijrah*, the Prophet communicated his dawah message secretly. It did not mean that the Prophet had a meeting with the idolaters of Makkah, and then as a matter of bilateral decision-making decided not to propagate his message publicly but in secret. It was rather that by making concessions to circumstances, he on his own adopted the method of secret propagation, without waiting for any social compulsion.

The essence of the *Hudaibiya* spirit is to completely refrain from entering into any controversy with the other party and to concentrate one's efforts on achieving one's goal in non-controversial fields. This policy can be followed only when the *dayee* is willing to give concessions to the other party unilaterally—such concessions as the other party at that time considers its right. The *Hudaibiya* policy cannot be followed without such unilateral concession-making. A study of the Prophet's biography shows that the Prophet always followed the same policy.

That is why it became possible for him to minimize his losses and maximize benefits.

The incident of *Hudaibiya* provides a historic example of conduct appropriate to the situation. The believers on that occasion, in taking up a godly attitude, entitled themselves to victory, while the Quraysh who took up an ungodly attitude had consequently to suffer defeat and failure.

The incident of *Hudaibiya* is not simply a chapter of history. It is a living historical proof. It tells believers in every age as to which course in controversial situations is a sure guarantee of success. This involves refraining from making a controversial matter into one of prestige, but rather trying to seek a solution in the spirit of *taqwa* (God-fearing spirit). □



**WE LOOK FORWARD  
TO YOUR FEEDBACK**

*Dear Readers,*

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

*[thecentreforpeace@gmail.com](mailto:thecentreforpeace@gmail.com)*

# THE SPIRIT OF ISLAM

## *Religion of Nature*

**I**SLAM is the answer to the demands of nature. It is in fact a complement of human nature. This is why Islam has been called a religion of nature in the Quran and *Hadith*.

A man came to the Prophet Muhammad and asked him what he should do in a certain matter. The Prophet replied, 'Consult your heart about it.' By the heart, the Prophet meant common sense. That is, what one's common sense tells would likewise be the demand of Islam.

What does human nature desire more than anything? It desires, above all, peace and love. Every human being wants to live in peace and to receive love from the people around him. Peace and love are the religion of human nature as well as the demand of Islam. The Quran tells us, "God calls to the home of peace." (10: 25)

***In Islam, there is no need for any intermediary to establish contact between God and man. At any time and place man can contact God directly.***

One of the teachings of Islam is that when two or more people meet, they must greet one another with the words, *Assalamu-Alaikum* (Peace be upon you). Similarly, *Salat*, or prayer, five times daily is the highest form of worship in Islam. At the close of each prayer all worshippers have to turn their faces to either side and utter the words *Assalamu-Alaikum wa rahmatullah* (May peace and God's blessing be upon you). This is like a pledge given to people: 'O people you are safe from

me. Your life, your property, your honour is secure with me.'

This sums up the spirit of true religion, the goal of which is spiritual upliftment. It is the ultimate state of this spiritual uplift which is referred to in the Quran as the "soul at peace". (87: 27)

Thus a true and perfect man, from the religious point of view, is one who has reached that level of spiritual development where nothing but peace prevails. When a person has attained that peaceful state, others will receive from him nothing but peace. He may be likened to a flower which can send out only its fragrance to man, it being impossible for it to emit a foul smell.

A story relating to a saint very aptly illustrates the spirit of religion. The story goes that once a Sufi was travelling along with his disciples.



During the journey he encamped near a large grove of trees upon which doves used to perch.

During this halt one of the Sufi's disciples aimed at one of the doves, killed it, cooked it and then ate it. Afterwards something strange happened. A flock of doves came to the tree under which the Sufi was resting and began hovering over it and making a noise.

The Sufi, communicating with the leader of the birds, asked what the matter with them was and why they were protesting. The leader replied, 'We have a complaint to make against you, that is, one of your disciples has killed one of us.' Then the Sufi called the disciple in question and asked him about it. He said that he had not done anything wrong, as the birds were their foodstuff. He was hungry, so he killed one for food. He thought that in so doing he had not done anything wrong. The Sufi then conveyed this reply to the leader of the doves.

The latter replied: 'Perhaps you have failed to understand our point. Actually what we are complaining about is that all of you came here in the garb of Sufis yet acted as hunters. Had you come here in hunter's garb; we would certainly have remained alert. When we saw you in the guise of Sufis, we thought that we were safe with you and remained perched on the top of the tree without being properly vigilant.'

***What does human nature desire more than anything? It desires, above all, peace and love.***

This parable illustrates well the reality of a truly religious or spiritual person. One who has reached the stage of spiritual upliftment and has found the true essence of religion no longer has the will or capacity to do harm. He gives life not death, to others. He benefits others, doing no injury to anyone. In short, he lives among the people like flowers and not like thorns. He has nothing but love in his heart to bestow upon others.

Some verses from the Quran about prayer and meditation in Islam are now discussed here:

*"When My servants ask you about Me, say that I am near. I respond to the call of one who calls, whenever he calls to Me: let them, then, respond to Me, and believe in Me, so that they may be rightly guided."* (2: 186)

This verse of the Quran tells us that in Islam there is no need for any intermediary to establish contact between God and man. At any time and place man can contact God directly. The only condition is that man should turn to God with sincere devotion.

Meditation in Islam aims at bringing man closer to God. When man worships God, when he remembers Him, when his heart is turned towards Him in full concentration, when he makes a request or a plea, then he establishes a rapport with his Maker. In the words of the *Hadith*, at that particular moment he comes to whisper with his Lord. He has the tangible feeling that he is pouring his heart out to God and that God in turn is answering his call.

When this communion is established between God and man, man can feel himself becoming imbued with a special kind of peace. His eyes are moist with tears. He starts receiving inspiration from God. It is in moments such as these that man can rest assured of his prayers being granted by God.

According to a *Hadith*, the Prophet Muhammad said the highest form of worship is to pray as if you were seeing God. We learn from this *Hadith* the true sign of a superior form of worship. For man, the true sign is to sense the presence of God during worship, and feel that he has come close to God. That is when he can experience the refreshing, invigorating effect of God's love and blessings for man. It is this feeling of closeness to God which is the highest form of spiritual experience. □



# FROM THE LIFE OF THE PROPHET

## *Peaceful Coexistence with People of other Faiths*

### **The Prophet's Treaties with Christians and Jews**

The migration, or *Hijrah*, of the Muslims of Makkah to Yathrib in AD 622 opened a new chapter in the life of the newly-founded Muslim community. Till then those who had accepted Islam were themselves persecuted by the inhabitants of Makkah and its surroundings, but once the decision to migrate to Yathrib was taken, the Muslims found themselves in a position of strength. They further strengthened their position by entering into treaties with non-Muslims. Of these treaties the most important was the treaty signed by the Prophet Muhammad himself soon after the Muslims arrived in Yathrib, which later came to be known as *Madinatul-Nabi*, the Prophet's city. The main parties to these treaties were the Muslim emigrants and the inhabitants of Madinah.

There were many tribes then in the Arabian Peninsula, some of which were Jewish or Christian. They used to follow their own laws and customs, and worshipped God according to the tenets of their respective religions. There was no pressure on the part of the Prophet to convert them to Islam. Rather, he recognised them as People of the Book, that is, people to whom God's messages were sent in earlier times and were enshrined in their scriptures. The Prophet let them lead a peaceful life, treated their religion with respect and entered into a number of treaties with them to ensure mutual cooperation.

In Madinah itself, the Jews were a part of the local community and the Prophet made a treaty with them, keeping peaceful coexistence in mind. He never acted against them until they opened direct hostilities against him. But after the Battle of Badr, which took place in AD 624 the Prophet had to deal with the Jewish tribe of the Banu Qainuqa most sternly, for they had sided with the disbelievers, aided the Makkans and broken their treaties with the Prophet. Consequently, they were expelled from Madinah. However, it is important to remember that the decision to expel them from Madinah was not dictated by religious prejudice but by the fact that they had broken the treaty. As the trust is one of the very important social obligations enjoined in the Quran and the breaking of treaties is labelled as a sin, it was the behaviour of the tribe and not their religion, which dictated the decision of the Prophet, in which God guided him through a revelation. (59: 15)

After that, the Prophet entered into many treaties with the Jews and the Christians of Arabia. In AD 632, the Christians of Najran sent a deputation to the Prophet. The Prophet lodged the members of the deputation in his mosque and permitted them to say their prayers there according to their own faith. He conveyed to them the message of Islam. They entered into a treaty with the Muslims and were given a pledge that they would be free to practice their religion and have the protection of the state on the payment of a poll tax.

***Islam has been remarkably unique in legislating laws with compassion and sympathy in matters relating to the non-Muslim citizens of a Islamic state.***

The text of the treaty signed by the Prophet with the Christians of Najran is a historical document giving evidence of a guarantee of the right to religious freedom under Islam. It runs as follows:

The Najran and those living therein are placed under the protection of God and the responsibility of Muhammad, the Prophet and Messenger of God, so far as their lives, their religion, their lands, their property, the individual members both present and absent, their places of worship and their right of prayers are concerned. Similarly, neither any priest nor monk shall be removed from his position, nor a person making a religious endowment shall be deprived of his bequeathed state. And all that they legally own, small and big, shall belong to them, so long it has nothing to do with usury or the blood vengeance prevalent during the days of ignorance.

And in case a person claims something from them by right, it will be settled on the basis of equity and justice and without discrimination to either of the parties. Whoever has taken usury before signing this covenant, I do not hold any obligation for that. Nobody shall be held liable for the acts of oppression committed by any other member of his community. God and His Messenger shall remain bound for all time by the contents of this treaty, unless decreed by God, provided they (the Christians of Najran) remain sincere and continue dealing with fairness among themselves and without resorting to injustice or acts of oppression against each other.'

A careful study of the life of the Prophet, through the Quran and traditions, confirms that he never tired of calling people to the path of God, or of exhorting them to maintain peace. He was firm in his stand that peace was better than war. Peaceful coexistence, established

through a network of peace treaties and divine guidance, especially pertinent in the treatment of non-Muslims and even the Muslims' opponents, was more pleasing to God than direct hostilities. The Quran says: 'Permission to fight is granted to those who are attacked, because they have been wronged—God indeed has the power to help them.' (22: 39) and 'Fight in God's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression—for surely, God does not love aggressors.' (2: 190)

To emulate the Prophet is considered *Sunnah* in Islam and his treatment of other communities should serve as a guideline to be emulated also in today's world. If he considered the treaties as a framework for working out differences and ensuring peaceful living conditions, the same should be done in the contemporary world.

### **Policy Towards People of other Faiths**

The attitude of Islam towards non-Muslims is summed up in the Quranic verses: "There should be no compulsion in religion" (2: 256) and "Your (Prophet's) duty is only to convey the Message" (42: 48). Compulsion is thus ruled out for the purpose of the propagation of Islam. The duty of the Prophet is merely to communicate and propagate the Message. It can be said of the period of the Prophet and the regime of his Rightly Guided Caliphs that no one ever embraced Islam through compulsion.

The Quran lays down a unique principle in regard to the treatment of non-Muslims. It grants complete autonomy to every religious community, which not only then enjoys freedom of faith and worship in its own way, but is also free to follow its own laws and cases decided by its own judges. The concept of complete internal autonomy has been advocated in a number of Quranic verses, one of which is very clear: "And let the People of the Gospel judge according to what God has revealed therein". (5: 47)

*Prophet's life confirms that he never tired of calling people to the path of God, or of exhorting them to maintain peace. He was firm in his stand that peace was better than war.*

This means Christians should judge according to the laws given by God in the Bible. In deference to this principle, every religious community was granted complete autonomy during the time of the Prophet. They enjoyed as much freedom in respect of their religion, worship and legal matters as did any Muslim. A little later a new development took

place. It was made incumbent on every Muslim to participate in war but non-Muslims were exempted from this duty for the simple reason that they could not be compelled to help the cause of Muslims. Muslims defended the frontiers of the state and laid down their lives for it, but non-Muslim citizens of the state enjoyed the fruits of peace, safety and security. They only paid a small price for this enviable privilege, by way of a tax called *jizyah*. This was not an innovation of Islam. Islam inherited this institution from Iran, where those who did not discharge military duty had to pay this tax. The tax on non-Muslim citizens was very light. It was equivalent to ten days' food in a year—a small price to pay for being guaranteed full protection as a citizen and an exemption from military duties.

No discrimination was exercised against non-Muslims on the basis of religion. In AD 624, after the Muslim victory at the Battle of Badr, Makkans sent yet another delegation to the Negus (King of Abyssinia) with a view to seek the repatriation of Muslims from Abyssinia so that they could be persecuted at home. To counter the move, the Prophet sent a non-Muslim, Amr ibn Umayyah al-Qumri, as his ambassador to the court of the Negus.

The attitude of the Prophet towards his Jewish neighbours was kind and cordial. He always visited their homes to enquire after the health of their sick children. There was a Jewish tribe by the name of Banu Arid in Madinah. The Prophet had been pleased with them for some reason and had fixed an annual stipend for them. When the funeral procession of a Jew passed by in the street, the Prophet always stood up as a mark of deference.

The attitude of the Muslims towards their non-Muslim compatriots was one of kindness, consideration and extreme tolerance. This generous treatment was reciprocated by their trust and loyalty. A civil war started in the Muslim state during the Caliphate of Uthman and continued down the ages, but never once did non-Muslim subjects raise the standard of revolt. They sided neither with one nor the other party. They always remained neutral and never took advantage of the situation. The ruler of Byzantium strongly urged the Christian citizens of Islamic empire to rise in revolt while a civil war was raging between Ali and Mu'awiyah. He promised to liberate them by attacking the Muslims, but he did not succeed in inciting a rebellion. Such efforts continued down the ages until the time of the Crusades, but the Christians responded by saying that they preferred the Muslim rulers to their co-religionists.

The reason for this loyalty was the fact that the Muslims never compelled the Christians to renounce their religion and gave them complete religious freedom. Their religious institutions received aid and assistance from Muslims. An authentic original document exists belonging to the period of Umar in which a Christian gives the good news to his co-religionists in another city, saying that a new nation had taken over as their ruler, but it did not indulge in tyranny. On the contrary, it protected their churches and gave financial aid to their converts.

There are no priests or missionaries in Islam. It is the duty of all Muslims, men and women both, to convey the message of Islam to humankind. This duty cannot be performed by ignorant and illiterate persons who can neither read the Quran nor understand its meaning. So, to convey the message the Muslims should know the beliefs of Islam and they should be helpful and kind to the non-Muslims. If they keep away from the non-Muslims, if they hate them or do not respect them, they will not be able to convey the message. That is why the Quran says: 'Do not abuse the gods of other religions or their prophets and religious men'. The Prophet always showed great respect for the non-Muslims, treating them kindly, and never doing anything that injured their feelings. Therefore, friendship and cooperation with people of other faiths is a religious duty of all Muslims. War is allowed only as an act of defense. For friendly non-Muslims, Islam offers friendship and goodwill. There is not a single instance in history where the Muslims stabbed a friendly non-Muslim power in the back. Islam stands for justice and fair-play for all, whether Muslims or non-Muslims.

*The rights and privileges awarded to the non-Muslim minority in an Islamic state have no precedent in the entire history of humankind.*

### **The Rights of Non-Muslims in Islam**

Islam as a religion possesses very clear guidelines for the treatment of non-Muslims and gives them the right to live according to their own faith. The Jews and the Christians are called the People of the Book and considered to believe, like the Muslims, in the One and Only God. On the authority of Abu Da'ud (a noted compiler of Prophetic traditions), it has been reported that Messenger of God said: "On the day of resurrection I shall stand as the defender of anyone whose covenants are broken by others, whose rights are usurped; who has burdens imposed upon

him which are beyond his physical capacities, and from whom things are taken without his consent."

Another tradition recorded by Abu Yusuf in his book, '*Al-Kharaj*,' mentions Caliph Umar as saying:

'I advise whosoever is going to be my successor to be kind and just to 'the people of *dhimmah*' (non-Muslim citizens living under the protection of an Islamic state), to fulfill all their obligations towards them, to defend them against any external threats and not to compel them to do what is beyond their physical powers.'

It can therefore be said with great truthfulness that Islam has been remarkably unique in legislating laws with compassion and sympathy in matters relating to the non-Muslim citizens of a Islamic state.

It is the duty of the Islamic state to provide internal and external security and religious freedom to its non-Muslim citizens. To offset this protection and exemption from defence service granted to them, Islam imposes a small tax, known as *jizyah*, which is to be paid only by those who are financially solvent. The rights and privileges awarded to the non-Muslim minority in an Islamic state have no precedent in the entire history of humankind.

Here are some of the teachings of Islam that underline the need for justice and equality to the non-Muslims living in an Islamic state.

It is stated in the Quran: 'God does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with anyone who has not fought you on account of your faith or driven you out of your homes.' (60: 8)

God also calls upon Muslims to strictly adhere to the principle of justice and equity while dealing with those who do not share their convictions. He says: 'Do not let your enmity for others turn you away from justice. Deal justly; that is nearer to being God-fearing. Fear God. God is aware of all that you do.' (5: 8)

The teachings of the Prophet abound in similar injunctions. He has repeatedly commanded his followers to be kind and fair to their non-Muslim fellow-citizens and prohibited them from subjecting them to oppression or injustice and denying them their basic human rights and freedom. Non-Muslims were allowed to be ruled by their own laws, and to follow the tenets of their own faith. Muslims were prohibited from coercing them into acceptance of Islam.

The Islamic state was bound to provide the People of the Book with full protection in old age, physical weakness, poverty and hunger. It is well-

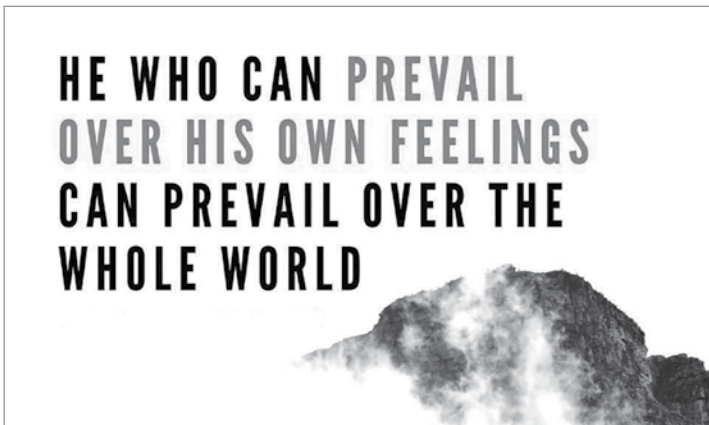


reported that Caliph Umar used to show great personal concern for the welfare and well-being of the non-Muslim minority living under his care by keeping himself well informed of their conditions and suffering. He came to their rescue whenever the need arose. While patrolling the neighbourhoods, he once came upon an old man belonging to the non-Muslim community begging from door to door. Feeling grieved and perturbed, he commented: 'How can I have the courage to face my Lord (on the day of Judgement) when one of my subjects is compelled to beg in order to earn his livelihood. Certainly, this is not the justice and equity that the Islamic *Shariah* intends to achieve in dealing with the non-Muslim subjects living in an Islamic State.'

As its name signifies, Islam is a religion of peace and security, therefore, non-Muslims should be free of any fear of being treated in a way displeasing to God. The Quran states:

'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.' (2: 62)

The rights conceded to non-Muslims by Islam cover a wide range of what today might be classified as basic human rights, such as the right to freedom of expression, the right to belief and worship, the right to security and privacy, and the right to protection by the state and the authorities. In no way, as mentioned in the verse of the Quran quoted above, should a dislike or hatred of a nation influence Muslims in their dealings with it, or cause them to abandon the code of justice prescribed by God. □



# 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*



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## GRATITUDE EVEN FOR LESSER THINGS

**O**NE of the teachings of the Prophet of Islam is: “One who is not thankful for getting lesser things will not be thankful for getting greater things.”

This saying enshrines a law of nature. The law of nature is that by remembering a lesser event, events of greater importance are recalled.

Psychological studies tell us that there are many separate files in the human mind. For instance, the file of love, the file of hate, the file of acknowledgement, the file of oppression, etc. Data about all those things which are part of one's experience are constantly being filed away separately in the mind. When a person is affected by some event, his mind is stimulated and the file on that subject is then immediately opened up and all the events of that nature get classified anew in the human mind.

This law of nature is of great importance in the matter of thankfulness and acknowledgement. For instance, you received a mobile phone today, you spoke to someone some distance away, then you thought that earlier I was faced with such difficulty in making contact with someone who was far away, then with deep emotion, you thank God. At that point,

your mind will be jogged. Then the file in the mind will be opened up in which all the items warranting thankfulness become reminders of greater events when thankfulness was appropriate. In this way smaller incidents of thankfulness become pointers to a greater degree of thankfulness, to the point where finally a spring of thankfulness overflows in a person's heart. This feeling of gratitude increases our attachment with God and ultimately causes us to reach the highest levels of realization. □

***One who is not thankful for getting lesser things will not be thankful for getting greater things.***



Never forget that the life of this world is only a game and a passing delight, a show, and mutual boasting and trying to outrival each other in riches and children. It is like the growth of vegetation after the rain, which delights the planter, but which then withers away, turns yellow and becomes worthless stubble.

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THE QURAN 57.20

# THE MAKERS OF HISTORY

*Sacrifice for Greater Good*

**W**HEN it comes to getting rewards for human effort, people fall into two distinct categories. The first are those who expect more than their due for whatever they have done, and the second group of people simply do a job and then forget about it. The second class of people do not complain even if they are not paid. They derive their satisfaction from leading a purposeful life, and not from immediate dividends.

Both of these types appear on the surface to be the same kind of human beings, but they differ radically in that the first category only knows how to conduct business, while the second actually makes history. It is the latter who are the real assets to humanity.

***Any great work requires the combined efforts of many. But in such a joint venture, the rewards are never evenly divided.***

Any great work requires the combined efforts of many. But in such a joint venture, the rewards are never evenly divided. It is inevitable that some receive more, others less. Some are given credit, while others are passed over. Some are welcomed, while others are ignored. This is a natural state of affairs and is bound to prevail whether the movement is a popular one, or one launched by a Prophet or other great leaders. Once this has been accepted it should be clear that the continuance and success of a joint venture

depends upon its supporters' willingness to forget their rights and remember their responsibilities. Such an attitude is necessary in a joint venture. People should not bother if they go completely unrewarded or they only feel that they have received less than their due.

Those alone can perform great tasks and attain to greatness, for whom the accomplishment of the task itself is the real reward. The fulfillment of their responsibilities brings them such satisfaction that they desire no further recompense. □



# THE WONDERS OF CREATION

*Look through the Eyes of a Child*

**I**N order to enjoy God's creation to the full, man must shed his indifference. He must look at the sunrise with the eyes of the very young, and listen to the glad outpourings of the birds as if they sang for the first time in creation.

"When opened it was like a small tent, and when shut, it was all curiously jointed and would fold up to the length of a man's hand." Nowadays we would have some difficulty in recognizing the ubiquitous umbrella from this description, but that is how it appeared to an early observer when it was invented in London in 1749. When a hand pump was first installed in an Indian village at the beginning of the century, it was an object of great astonishment and curiosity. One old woman, on seeing it, exclaimed: "Only death has defeated man!"

Thus, a long time ago, newly invented umbrella and the handpump appeared quite extraordinary. Nowadays, however, they have become so commonplace, that people do not even give them a second glance. Regrettably, our attitude to the objects of God's creation is very similar. They had lost their novelty for us even before the handpump and the umbrella had come on the scene. Yet, everything that exists in this world, be it the budding trees or the birds on the wing, is quite wonderful beyond words. Because man sees these lovely things every day, he ceases to have any regard for their beauty and he loses his sense of wonder at their very creation. But, were he to see them for the first time, like a blind man who has suddenly regained his sight, his amazement would be unbounded. He would marvel at every leaf and every petal, and at every little feather on the wings of the birds. □

*In order to enjoy God's creation to the full, man must shed his indifference. He must look at the sunrise with the eyes of the very young and listen to the glad outpourings of the birds as if they sang for the first time in creation.*



# FACING MISFORTUNE

## *The Road to Success*

Whatever misfortune befalls you is of your own doing—God forgives much. (42: 30)

**T**HIS verse of the Quran informs us that whenever a man is afflicted by some misfortune, it is necessarily the result of one or more of his own actions. Complaining against others in this world is meaningless. Everyone must suffer the consequences of his own actions. Protests and complaints against others are only a waste of time. It will in no way solve the problem.

This system is devised by nature itself. It offers great hope for us; in that it has placed our problems in our own hands. It has not left us to be dependent on the charity and compassion of others.

***Acting hastily, a man invites trouble, but then he always has the possibility of turning the situation to good account by adopting the ways of patience and resilience.***

If the problems we face are caused by others, we would be dependent upon others for their solution. We would have to wait for others' kindness. But God has devised the system of the world in such a way that He has made everyone's concerns his own personal affair. That is, everyone can construct his life by dint of his own efforts. Everyone's future is in his own hands.

One has to incur loss due to one's own imprudence. Much harm can be avoided by adopting wise ways. An initiative goes awry

for lack of planning. But there will always be other chances to work in future in a planned way so that the mistake may be rectified. Acting hastily, a man invites trouble, but then he always has the possibility of turning the situation to good account by adopting the ways of patience and resilience. Sometimes people bring ruin upon themselves by being too emotional, but they too have the chance to reach their goal by remaining unruffled and rational in their approach on subsequent occasions. □



# EACH CREATION IS A MIRACLE

*Window to God-realization*

**B**EFORE the commencement of his prophetic mission, Moses, together with his wife and family, was traveling from Midian. When he arrived at Mount Sinai, a storm was blowing, and they had lost their way. Then, on the mountainside, Moses saw a fire, and said to his wife:

Wait here. I can see a fire. Perhaps I can bring you a brand from it, or find some guidance at the fire. (20: 10)

But when he came near, he found that there was much more in the 'Burning Bush' than met the eye:

...A voice called out to him: 'Moses, I am your Lord...' (20: 11-12)

The Lord then asked him, 'What do you have in your right hand, Moses?' He replied, 'It is my staff. I lean on it, and with it, I beat down the leaves for my flock; I also have other uses for it.' But when Moses, at God's command, cast it down, it turned into a fast-moving serpent. Similarly, Moses' hand, when he put it under his armpit, came out shining white—another sign from God.

In ancient times the miracles were given to Prophets in order to convince people of their being true prophets. But in modern times, science can be used as substitute to miracles.

The revelation of the Quran, being the final book of God, marked the end of the prophetic era. After the Prophet Muhammad, unto whom the Quran was revealed, no other prophet would come to the world. That meant the end of miracles as the world had known them. But miracles provide a powerful incentive for faith; they are a living proof of the truth of the prophets' message; without them, many would miss the opportunity to get to know God. What would then compensate their absence? It was decided that human learning itself should encompass the miraculous properties invested in all things; knowledge of the inner significance of matter, which had hitherto been revealed unto prophets alone, should be made available to the whole of the human race.

***Miracles provide a powerful incentive for faith; they are a living proof of the truth of the prophets' message.***

The Quran made this advance in human learning possible by opening the way for human investigation into natural phenomena. The sun, moon, stars and other things that had previously been considered gods in themselves were clearly stated to be the work of God, and signs of His singular power. When they were considered divine, these natural phenomena could not be investigated, for who can delve into the nature of "god"; but in their new context they became accessible to critical and objective study: that which had been an object of worship became an object of investigation.

This process was started by the Quran which stressed that everything in the universe was a sign of God. It culminated in the scientific revolution of recent times—the knowledge explosion which has thrown open the inner significance of things. It is now possible for man, without the aid of prophetic miracles, to perceive the miraculous nature of all things, and conclude that such feats of creation can only be the work of a masterful creator.

***If one observes the universe in depth, as science allows one to do, and draws conclusions in the light of Quranic teachings, one will see that everything is a miracle.***

To take an example, a traveller visited the Red Sea, where Moses performed his most famous miracle—the parting of the sea. Armed with modern scientific equipment, he was able to observe the mass of colourful coral reefs, the dazzling array of glistening fish, and the elaborate marine growth that lay beneath its waters. Struck by the wondrous beauty, he wrote:

At the Red Sea, it isn't necessary to behold the face of the Lord in the burning bush of Sinai or have the waves part for escape from the Pharaoh's chariots. One can prove the existence of God even by means of face-mask and a snorkel. For just below the surface is a seething, kaleidoscopic universe that could only be the creation of an omnipotent artist, an all-knowing scientist, a Supreme practical-joker. (Jeff Davidson in *Readers Digest*, May, 1984.)

Such observations have only been made possible by the advances of science, and science only advanced because the Quran made it possible for it to do so. If one observes the universe in depth, as science allows one to do, and draws conclusions in the light of Quranic teachings, one will see that everything is a miracle; one will see the face of God shining in His creation. □



# BELIEF IN ANGELS

## *True Fulfilment*

Belief in *Malaika* or the angels is a fundamental article of faith in Islam. A Muslim should believe in the existence of angels, although they may be unseen to us in this world.

**O**F the many beings created by God, the angels are of special importance. They have been invested by God with the supernatural power to keep order in the functioning of the universe. They do not, however, deviate in the slightest from the path of God, for all their actions are in complete obedience to His will. This is because they have not been invested with free will by God Almighty.

Diverse and numerous events are taking place at every moment in the universe, for instance, the movement of the stars, the shining of the sun and moon, the falling of the rain, the alternation of the seasons, and many more. All of these, and many other continually recurring events are attended to by the angels. Working in the universe as extremely faithful and obedient servants of God, they ensure the continued existence of the human and animal species on earth.

As well as running the world's systems, these angels, a numerous band, take charge of all matters in Heaven and Hell.

The role of the angels can be understood by the example of a large factory. In any such factory, there are many big and complex machines, which produce the goods for which the factory has been established. But these machines do not run on their own. To facilitate their smooth running, many human hands are required. Therefore, in every factory there are always a number of people whose duty it is to attend constantly to their proper and efficient functioning. Similarly, countless angels are appointed to ensure the proper functioning of the great factory of the universe.

The difference between the two factories is simply that in the material one, the human hands are visible, while in the metaphorical one—the great mechanism of the universe—the angels remain invisible.

***Angels are continuously present on earth, particularly at prayer times. Man may not be able to see the angels, but the angels can certainly see man and are in constant touch with human beings.***

Angels (*malaika*, literally meaning ‘messenger’) serve as intermediaries between God and man. They transmit messages to His envoys, worthy individuals who are specially chosen by God for the task of being His messengers. These messengers are called prophets, and it is the prophets alone who receive the divine revelations, through an angel, who is the celestial messenger. According to the Quran, the angel Gabriel (Jibrail), meaning the ‘power of God,’—also alluded to in the Quran as a “trustworthy spirit” (*al-ruh-al-amin*)—brought divine revelations to the Prophet of Islam.

Most important among the angels are Jibrail, Mikail, Izrail and Israfil.

Jibrail, as mentioned, is the ‘holy spirit’, who brings revelations from God to His prophets.

***Of the many beings created by God, the angels are of special importance. They have been invested by God with the supernatural power to keep order in the functioning of the universe.***

Izrail is called the angel of death, for he takes away the souls of the dying.

Israfil will blow the trumpet when the time comes for the world to end and on the Day of Judgement.

The angels, who continuously praise and glorify the Lord, have been given the necessary qualities and powers to perform specific functions. They have no free will. They always obey God and never displease Him. Man, on the other hand, has been given free will and can choose between right and wrong.

Angels are creatures of light who pervade the whole universe. Although in the kingdom of God there are many millions of them, they belong to the realm of the invisible, so that the only way we can see them is if they appear in human form. Jibrail used to appear to the Prophet in various forms. Sometimes he hung suspended in the air, sometimes he appeared in the shape of a man, and sometimes he sprouted wings, etc. The angel Jibrail once appeared before a gathering of the Companions of the Prophet in order to teach them about Islam. On that occasion, he took the form of a Companion of the Prophet. Angels can take any suitable form in order to perform their duties, and are constantly occupied in carrying out God’s orders.

Angels are continuously present on earth, particularly at prayer times. Man may not be able to see the angels, but the angels can certainly see man and are in constant touch with human beings. They keep a watch on them on behalf of God and many of them are eternally busy

recording all of our thoughts, words and deeds. They are called the 'respected recorders' (*kiraman katibin*). Not a single word we say goes unrecorded. (50: 18)

They are the friends and protectors (41: 30-32) of human beings, and are God's most obedient and loyal servants.

Man may not be able to see the angels, but the angels can certainly see man, and keep a watch on him on behalf of God. It is these very angels who take man's soul away at death. □



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# LAID-BACK ATTITUDE LEADS TO FAILURE

*Take Stock of Every Moment*

**I**T is hard to believe that any animal could be more dangerous or terrifying than the man-eating tiger. But it is not the tiger or the bear who is the most dangerous enemy of man. In truth, the most dangerous of our enemies are the bacteria which are so tiny that they remain invisible to the naked eye. Small they may be, but these bacteria breed at such a furious rate that, given favourable conditions, one of their number can reproduce itself 10,000 times over within a mere matter of ten hours. While a bear or a lion only occasionally eats a man alive, man is the constant target of deadly bacteria.

Their species run into thousands. We are fortunate, however, in that 99% of them are either beneficial or harmless. Though only one percent is harmful, its deadliness can claim the life of a man within a matter of seconds. All fatal diseases, according to medical science, are produced by such micro-organisms. Their very lack of bulk makes it possible for them to enter the human system in ways against which man has no natural system of defence.

***Laid-back negligence can creep into our souls, like bacteria into the body, and, if not pulled up short, can become an ingrained attitude, leading to moral corrosion.***

People are usually aware of seemingly big and obvious dangers, and imagine they must be responsible for all their misfortunes. But, if the truth be told, the harm done to us by these tiny living organisms far surpasses any havoc our bigger enemies can wreak.

When we come to think of it, the greatest damage of all is done by those seemingly insignificant and often short-lived moments of neglect—moments when timely action was our duty, when approval needed to be given or withheld, when advice or help or self-appraisal was needed, and we let the occasion slip by, heedless of the consequences. Laid-back negligence can creep into our souls, like bacteria into the body, and, if not pulled up short, can become an ingrained attitude, leading to moral corrosion.

A negligent attitude allows people to fritter away their time, day after day, with no thought for the future. Similarly, they squander substantial portions of their income. This wasted time and pointless

expenditure may seem a trivial matter, if it is just a question of one day—a few hours and a few rupees don't seem to add up much. But if one were to calculate the time and money thus wasted in one year and then in a whole lifetime, it would become clear that fully fifty percent of one's life and earnings had been squandered in vain pursuits. Take the total wastage of a whole nation and the loss assumes such enormous proportions that it quite goes beyond the imagination. □

*A negligent attitude allows people to fritter away their time, day after day, with no thought for the future.*



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# THE MISSION OF THE PROPHETS

## *The Right Criterion to Judge*

**T**HE view that most of the messengers of God did not succeed in achieving their goal is mistaken. It is often stated that only a minority of the messengers of God actually established a system based on their Message while most of them could not go beyond the mere proclamation of the truth. This is taken to mean that they failed to establish truth on earth.

But such views are far from the truth. How was it possible for the messengers of God to have failed in the task assigned to them while God was at their side? The question of their failure just does not arise. The reason being that such a conception is misguided.

The real fault lies in choosing the wrong criterion in judging the mission of the Prophets, which is, the degree to which they brought about a social and political revolution. This is the criterion by which mortals judge the success or failure of a man or group. By this token, those prophets who brought about political revolution would be considered successful and those who did not would be considered failures.

***The prophets were sent to convey to the people the word of God in its pure form and it was to be presented in the best possible way.***

This is not, however, the right way to judge the mission of the prophets. Their mission was simply proclamation of the truth. In no sense were they meant to establish a system. The prophets were sent to convey to the people the word of God in its pure form and it was to be presented in the best possible way.

They had to convey it in such a way that the congregation would fully understand the message and would bear witness to having been shown the true path—whether or not the message was accepted by them. When a prophet fulfilled these two conditions, he had fully discharged his responsibility.

When this standard of judgement is adopted, we find that all of the Prophets fully succeeded in achieving their goal, since each of them did his utmost to carry out the duty assigned to him—that of proclamation of truth. The prophets spared no effort in conveying the will of God to their nations. So much that their congregations were never left with the excuse that they had not been shown the way. They could never come before God, pleading their ignorance. □

# THE MIRAGE OF THE GOOD EGG

*The Ungentlemanly Gentleman*

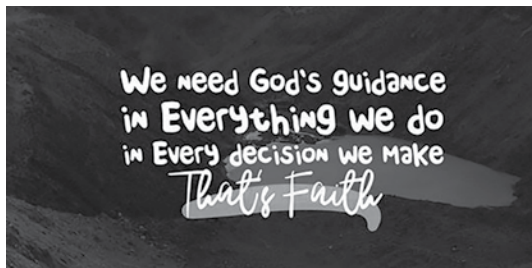
**L**OOK at an egg from the outside. It appears to be wholesome and good. This may be so, but it is not until we break the shell that we find out whether it is really good.

The same is true of many human beings today. It is not until their outer shell is pierced that we come to know the truth about them. Their bodies swaddled in elegant clothes, their ideas couched in eloquent words, they strike us as being fine creatures indeed. But under the finest veneer there can lurk an ugly, repulsive character. It is not until one gets close and has dealings with such a person that one discovers—particularly when there is a clash of interest—how uninspiring is the reality. Behind the gentlemanly facade lies a bundle of selfishness, cheapness, affectation, pride, prejudice, exploitative nature and arrogance. Challenge such a person's interests, and we see him in his true colours. He is not a good egg.

*It is not until one gets close and has dealings with a person that one discovers—particularly when there is a clash of interest—how uninspiring is the reality.*

In the vast morass of conflict which exists in the world today, it often seems that it is the hypocrite who remains supreme, the one who manages to project himself as the “good egg” to the rest of the world.

But this state of affairs can never last. The time is fast approaching when man will be ushered into another world where all hypocrisy will fall away, and all power will rest, not in the hand of man, but of God. □



# APPEARANCE AND REALITY

*Superficial Knowledge is Misleading*

ONE of the fiercest battles in Islamic history was waged against the Iranians in AD 636, during the Caliphate of Umar Faruq. The Iranian emperor's greatness had so impressed itself upon the peoples of the neighbouring countries that the Caliph Umar himself had been ready to lead this military campaign. He was advised against this, however, by his companions, and another Companion of the Prophet, Saad Ibn Abi Waqqas, was appointed instead as the commander of the Muslim forces.

It was an extremely difficult undertaking and the final encounter took place in a field near Qadisiyya. There was an ancient royal building near the battlefield, Saad climbed up to an upper storey and sat there, reclining against a wall. He showed no signs of personally taking part in the battle. Instead, he appointed Khalid ibn Arfata to lead his men into the fray. Saad then kept watching the battle from high up on the building and sent instructions whenever necessary to his proxy.

***Whenever something malevolent is said about other, it should not necessarily be believed without further investigation.***

The Arabs were baffled at first by the enormous array of elephants which the Iranians had brought, for they had no experience of fighting against such huge beasts. At one point, the Muslims were forced to retreat by this horde of animals to avoid being crushed to death. Saad became anguished at the spectacle of their defeat and began to toss himself from side to side. Saad's wife Salma who had accompanied him cried out, "If only Musanna (a certain warrior) were here!" Saad

was angry at this and exclaimed hotly, "What could Musanna have done? Salma retorted, "What a fine thing that your cowardice should be accompanied by anger and not shame!" She spoke sarcastically because her husband was not participating in the battle.

The Muslims nevertheless won the battle finally, and the details of how they did so are recorded in history.

The Muslim army took strong exception to Saad's not having physically participated in the hostilities. After the fall of the Iranians, a Muslim soldier composed a short poem which translated is:



*I fought till God sent down His succour  
And Saad clung to the door of the Qadisiyya.  
Then we returned and many women had been widowed,  
Yet not one of Saad's wives was widowed,*

Saad Ibn Abi Waqqas had been one of the early converts, and was with the Prophet in all battles. He was, in fact, reckoned to be one of the greatest and bravest Companions of the Prophet. But when we think of him holding himself aloof from the battle, we receive the impression that he must indeed have been a coward, allowing other women to be widowed while he himself preferred to remain in safety at the fort with his wife.

We feel that he cuts a sorry figure if the story so far is all that we have to judge him by. But when we have the complete picture, we realize that there were extenuating circumstances. It seems that he suffered from sciatica (a disease of the nerve, causing severe pain above the knee) and succumbed periodically to long bouts which almost totally incapacitated him. At the beginning of the campaign he was in perfect health and had participated in the initial skirmishes, but at the

***Saad Ibn Abi Waqqas  
cuts a sorry figure if  
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him by.***

outset of the final decisive encounter at Qadisiyya, he again fell prey to this recurring malady. Unable even to move, he found it impossible to launch himself into the fray. But thanks to his military experience and superior intellect, he was not relieved of his post by Caliph Umar, and it is an undeniable fact that if the battle was finally won it was because of his masterly planning and direction.

One obvious proof of his military acumen is that he found the solution to the menace of the elephants before the entire Muslim army was crushed. When everyone else was at his wits' end to find a means of averting this catastrophe, Saad sent for two Iranian converts, Zakhm and Salm, and found out from them that the only way to arrest the onslaught was to aim at the eyes and trunks of the elephants. Once injured in these places, the elephants would become uncontrollable.

Saad then sent for a group of young stalwarts and entrusted them with this difficult and hazardous task. They then picked out the two largest and strongest elephants, who were the leaders, Abyaz (The White) and Ajrab, and, at the risk of their own lives, injured their eyes and slashed off their trunks. Crazy and in agony, the two elephants turned back

upon their own army and the other elephants followed suit. It was now the turn of the Iranians to be crushed by their own elephants.

There are two great lessons to be learned from this event. One is that whenever something malevolent is said about other, it should not necessarily be believed without further investigation. Often, after

***It is only  
magnanimity, loyalty  
and obedience which  
can shore up the  
prospects of life's  
major initiatives.***

enquiries have been made, the true state of affairs emerges as being quite other than one at first imagined. Believing in something which denigrates others without taking the trouble to ascertain the validity of the allegation runs counter to the spirit of Islam.

Another lesson is that of the obedience demonstrated by the Arab warriors at Qadisiyya. In spite of the fact that their leader was far from perfect, they did not turn against him or refuse to do their utmost to win the

battle. They had major grudges against him but they still fought as dauntlessly as ever.

Such are the people who make history. Those who are lacking in this spirit will inevitably turn success into failure, victory into defeat. It is only magnanimity, loyalty and obedience which can shore up the prospects of life's major initiatives. □



**IGNORANT  
IS HE WHO  
ALWAYS KEEPS  
COMPLAINING**

# NUCLEAR FISSION

*Unbounded Reservoir of Energy*

**A** LOCOMOTIVE consumes two tons of coal for every seventy miles it travels. A motor car uses up a gallon of petrol every twenty to forty miles. But when just twelve pounds of uranium is converted into atomic energy, it can send a high-speed rocket soaring 40,000 miles into space. Whatever the performance, each type of fuel must undergo a drastic change to produce the energy required. Coal and petrol are burnt to produce energy. But to obtain atomic energy, the atom—the smallest portion of an element which can take part in a chemical reaction—has to be smashed. Far from being destroyed, it is transformed into the most powerful form of energy ever known to humankind.

What the atom is to matter, man is to society, in terms of his being its basic structural unit. When his destruction, or ruination takes place, it is like matter being converted into energy. Dormant forces are released in him, just as nuclear energy is generated when the atom is smashed. Defeat has a galvanizing rather than a destructive effect, resulting in greater activity, greater resolve and a heightened sense of purpose. Man, now draws upon latent energy to win back what he has lost and to rise to even greater heights. His hidden potential manifests itself with tremendous vigour just as nuclear energy is released when an atomic explosion takes place. The spirit which rises within him is invincible, and nothing can arrest his advance. Like a river flowing to the sea, he surmounts every obstacle in the tireless pursuit of his goal. □

*Defeat has a galvanizing rather than a destructive effect on man, resulting in greater activity, greater resolve and a heightened sense of purpose.*



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# THE BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE

*Death is Not the End*

**O**F all moments that lie within the realm of human imagination, death is the most savage. All the other calamities that cause man distress are nothing compared to that which he encounters in the form of death.

With death, we enter the most difficult stage of our lives. We become totally powerless, destitute, and helpless. All worldly suffering has a limit, but in the world that we will enter after death suffering and torment will be unlimited.

***The worldly affliction which causes man distress on earth is trivial compared to the affliction of the Hereafter.***

In reality, this is the state of man in the present world. So inherently weak is man that he cannot bear even the slightest inconvenience. Just the prick of a needle, a day's hunger and thirst, or a few nights' insomnia are enough to rock his entire being. In this world, however, he has everything he needs. That is why he forgets his indigence, and remains blind to his true nature.

In this world man is provided with food and water, air and light; he is able to tame the forces of nature and bring civilization into existence. But if this world were taken away from him, he would not be able to fashion another world of this kind anywhere in the universe. It would be his lot to wander around in darkness.

The worldly affliction which causes man distress on earth is trivial compared to the affliction of the Hereafter. Worldly honour and ease make him proud and complacent, but they are of no consequence if they do not support his next, eternal life. If man were to be conscious of what would become of him after death, he would forget about his worldly state, and concentrate on consolidating his position in the world where both repose and torment are infinite.

Death is not the end of life; it is the beginning of a new stage of life. It will lead some into a den of unmitigated hardship, and others to a world of infinite happiness. □



# THE MAKING AND BREAKING OF HISTORY

## *Divine Design*

**A**CCORDING to the historian Barbara W. Tuchman, "History is the unfolding of miscalculations". In other words, history usually develops in a manner quite contrary to people's expectations. While events are unfolding, observers may pass judgement on the course they are taking; but the course of history defies all prediction. In the end, things turn out quite differently from what people had initially expected.

To cite an example from Islamic history, in the year AD 628, the Treaty of *Hudaibiya* was signed between the Prophet Muhammad and the Quraysh of Makkah. At that time, the Quraysh were one in thinking that the Muslims had signed their own writ of destruction, for they accepted peace on terms which were clearly favourable to the Quraysh. Yet afterwards it transpired that this apparent defeat contained the seeds of a great victory for the Muslims. This is an oft-repeated phenomenon in history. In 1945, when atom bombs were dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, it seemed to the Americans as if Japan would lie in ruins forever. Yet this was not to be. Within forty years after the catastrophe, Japan stood at the pinnacle of economic strength, and now it is a leading industrial power in the world.

This goes to show that it is not man who fashions his history. In truth, it is God who fashions human history in accordance with His own will. It is not people or events who control history, it is God. History may take place before our eyes, in the material world, but the course it takes is determined from the supernatural world which lies beyond our vision and perception.

Those who have been written off as spent forces can take solace from this fact of history. Experience shows that sparks erupt from volcanoes that have lain inactive for years. In this world the very annihilation and destruction of something means that it is ready to arise and take its place as a new power on earth. A force which is spent turns into a living force.

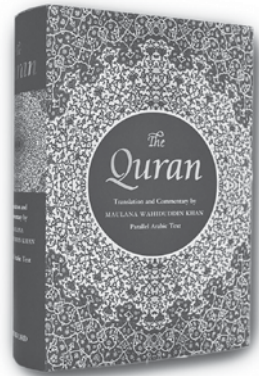
One should never lose hope because of the dismal course events appear to be taking. When the pages of history turn, events may turn out to have been leading in a direction quite contrary to all our expectations. □

# THE WORD OF GOD

*From The Scriptures*

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

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



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***God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him alone. That is the right path. Yet different groups differed among themselves. How awful it will be for those who have rejected the truth when a dreadful Day arrives! How sharp of hearing, how sharp of sight they will be when they come to Us. But today, these evil-doers are obviously lost in error.*** (19: 36-38)

The Messiah and all the other prophets called upon the people to tread the same straight path, namely, that of taking God as their Lord and worshipping Him alone. But it has always happened that, by willful misinterpretations and false explanations, there have been deviations from the straight path. Different people have emphasized different points of the doctrine. These divergent views have led to such major differences that a single religion has been divided into several religions.

The Truth is manifested in its entirety in this world too. But because here man has been given freedom of choice so that he may be put to the test, as the very purpose of his existence is trial, he may accept the Truth or he may not. Due to this temporary freedom, he falls a prey to misunderstanding and starts behaving arrogantly. He is shown the right path of God but, in spite of arguments in its favour, he does not accept it. Today his eyes and ears appear to be altogether devoid of the powers of seeing and hearing, but, in the Hereafter, when his freedom is snatched away from him, these very same eyes and very same ears of his will become so powerful that he will have no choice but to see and hear the Truth.

**Warn them of [the coming of] the Day of Remorse, when everything will have been decided, while they are heedless and do not believe. It is We who will inherit the earth and all who dwell upon it: they shall all return to Us.** (19: 39-40)

When a man meets with failure in this world, he has the opportunity to start his life afresh, and he feels himself fortunate to have friends and supporters who will offer him assistance. But, failure in the life Hereafter allows of no chance of reversal. What keen regret a man feels when he learns that he had the opportunity to do what was right and proper, but did nothing until it was too late!

The root cause of all evil is that man takes himself to be his own master, while the fact is that this life is only a transient period in his existence. God was the Lord of everything in the beginning and He will be the Lord of everything till the end. In truth, there is nobody but God who may hold the position of a master.

**Also recount the story of Abraham in the Book. He was a man of truth, and a prophet. He said to his father, 'Why do you worship something that can neither hear nor see nor benefit you in any way? Father, I have been given some knowledge which has not come to you, so follow me: I shall guide you along a straight path. Father! Do not worship Satan—for, truly, Satan is a rebel against the Most Gracious One! Father, indeed I fear lest a punishment from the Gracious One afflict you, and you become a friend of Satan.'** (19:41-45)

Abraham was born in Iraq. His father, Azar, was a polytheist. When Abraham received prophethood, he advised his father to give up polytheism and start worshipping God, or face God's retribution.

Worship of Satan does not mean actually worshipping Satan himself, but worshipping something indicated by Satan. Although it is an inherent part of human nature to feel the need to glorify some being, place it in an elevated position and then bow down and pay homage to it, the real focus of such feelings should be and is God. But, Satan, by various methods, influences people and diverts their minds from this in order to make them worship things other than God, i.e. place them on a par with those who associate others with God and offer only to others what they should offer to God. □



# ASK MAULANA

*Your Questions Answered*

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

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

---

***If there is a God, who created God?***

The answer to this question is in what the French philosopher Rene Descartes had said, 'I think, therefore I am.' To prove God's existence, I extend this logic to say, 'If I am, therefore, God is.' This is because a human being is like a mini-god, one who possesses all divine qualities in a smaller magnitude. If a mini-god's existence is possible, the Almighty God's existence is possible too. The choice before us is not between 'a universe with God' and 'a universe without God', the real choice instead is between 'a universe with God' and 'no universe at all'. The rationale is that when there is no option for you, the available option becomes the only choice.

Creation cannot be traced back endlessly. At some point, we will have to agree that there is someone who has brought creation into existence. If we do not accept this, the phenomenon of creation would be rendered endless and hence non-workable. Somewhere, we will have to put a full-stop, and agree that there is one all-powerful Creator.

***If there is a probability that God exists, isn't there also an equal probability that God does not exist?***

Probability means the likelihood of the occurrence of an event—that is, either the event is probable or it is not. For example, if there is probability that the universe is intelligent, it implies that the notion that the universe is not intelligent is not probable. So, when the proposition of the existence of a God is probable, then the probability that God does not exist is rejected.

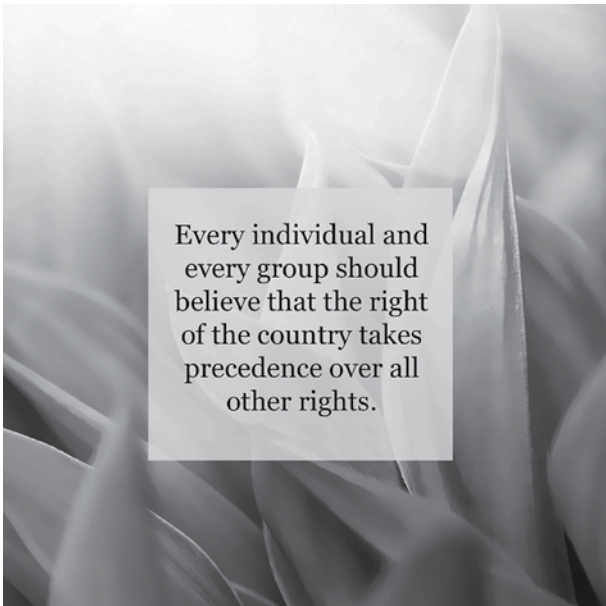


***Does God want us to have the spirit of enquiry so that we discover Him?***

God wants that people should stand on self-discovered faith and does not want faith to be imposed upon them. He has given intelligence to human beings so that they can evaluate and make a self-discovery of the truth. The spirit of enquiry is essential for this self-discovery.

***How do we understand God's Omnipresence, Omnipotence and Omniscience?***

God is omnipresent on the basis of His knowledge of things. It does not mean that God is physically present everywhere but that nothing escapes His knowledge. This also explains His omniscience. His being omnipotent means that He has set the laws of nature and without any exception, every human being is bound by it. No one can eliminate or alter these laws; we can only discover them and work according to the principles God has set for this world. His being omnipotent also implies that it is only He who can truly reward, punish or forgive us for our actions. □



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