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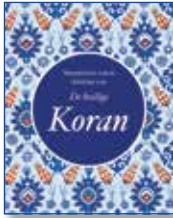
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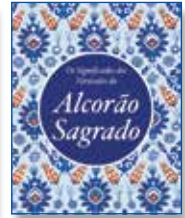
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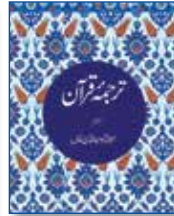
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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

ISSUE 64 APRIL 2018

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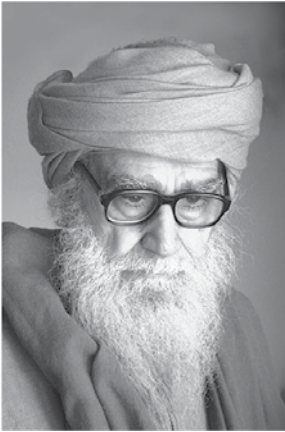
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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

STEPHEN HAWKING IS NO MORE

THE British scientist and cosmologist Stephen Hawking died on March 14, 2018 at the age of 76. He was regarded as the most important theoretical scientist of his time. Generally Dr. Hawking is considered to be a secular scientist but one theory developed by him is extremely important in respect of religion, and on this theory he worked all his life. It is known as the 'Theory of Everything' or 'Single String Theory' with each tiny string being a loop of energy. After the time of Einstein it was believed that there were four physical forces which controlled the entire universe, that is, gravitational force, electromagnetic force, strong nuclear force and weak nuclear force.

This theory that the universe is controlled by four forces did not appeal to the minds of scientists, because according to scientific observation, every part of the universe functions in an extremely unified way. The whole universe appears to be governed by a single law. This being so, the theory of four laws governing the present universe appears strange. Subsequent to the times of Einstein, when it was believed that there were four physical laws governing the universe one such

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

physical law was eliminated and then it was believed that there were three governing laws. In 1974 Dr. Hawking published a thesis in the journal *Nature* under the title “Black Hole Explosions?” This work is hailed by scientists as the first great landmark in the struggle to find a single theory of nature. With this, Dr. Hawking helped in laying the foundation for unifying the remaining two forces of nature—gravity and quantum mechanics, descriptions of the large and the small in the universe. Stephen Hawking worked further on this theory. In other words, Dr. Hawking’s work helped in the search for finding a cohesive explanation for the functioning of the universe. It is this explanation which is the equivalent of a scientific affirmation of the concept of one God.

In 1963, as a graduate student at Cambridge at the age of 21, Dr. Hawking learned that he had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a neuromuscular degenerative disease. He was given only two years to live by doctors. The disease gradually left him wheelchair-bound and paralyzed. He was able to move only a few fingers on one hand and was completely dependent on others or on technology for everything—bathing, dressing and eating. He used a speech synthesizer that allowed him to speak in a computerized voice. However, Dr. Hawking remained undeterred by his condition, becoming Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University, and publishing several bestsellers, including *A Brief History of Time* in 1988 and *Universe in a Nutshell* in 2001. His *A Brief History of Time*, which introduces in non-technical language the nature, origin and structure of the universe, made him known to people across the world. This book sold 10 million copies and was translated into 40 languages.

Considered on par with the likes of Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein, Dr. Hawking is regarded as his generation’s leader in exploring gravity and the properties of black holes. He discovered that black holes would eventually fizzle out leaking radiation, which is now known as Hawking radiation.

Dr. Hawking once said: “When you are faced with the possibility of an early death, it makes you realize that life is worth living and that there are a lot of things you want to do.” The British cosmologist Martin Rees said that millions around the world have been inspired by his unique example of achievement against all odds—a manifestation of amazing willpower and determination. He believed that people need not be limited by handicaps as long as they are not disabled in spirit. Dr. Hawking, according to the mathematical physicist Roger Penrose, had an absolute determination not to let anything get in his way and

thought that since he did not have long to live, he should get as much done as he could manage.

In my view, there were two significant contributions of Dr. Hawking for those who want to explain things in a scientific way. The first is the human contribution, that is, he put an end to the 'disabled theory', as Dr. Hawking was a living example who proved that one who has a challenging disability can overcome it and do every kind of work which 'able' people can do. This they achieve by availing of two things—their minds and modern technology.

The second contribution of Dr. Hawking is that he transformed a dream into reality. Everyone used to think that since the universe worked in a harmonious way, it ought to have a unified explanation. This was presented through Dr. Hawking's work on the single string theory.

Dr. Hawking has given the human race the message that we can make a big contribution to humanity and also live in the world with great hope. □

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

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FROM THE EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Dr. Farida Khanam has been a professor at the Department of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi. A Study of World's Major Religions, A Simple Guide to Sufism are two of the books amongst many others, of which she is the author. She has also translated many books on Islam authored by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. Currently, the chairperson of Centre for Peace and Spirituality (CPS International), an organization founded by her father Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, she is a regular contributor of articles to journals, newspapers and magazines. Dr. Khanam has edited Maulana's English translation of the Quran and has also translated his Urdu commentary of the Quran into English. Under Maulana Wahiduddin Khan Peace Foundation, along with the CPS team, she is designing a series of courses on peace-building, countering extremism and conflict resolution.

THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL WELFARE IN ISLAM

ALL human beings, according to Islam have been created by one and the same God, and for this reason they belong to one great brotherhood. All being descendants of the same progenitors, they should willingly come to one another's assistance, like members of the same large family. Charity has been preached by every religion of the world. Islam has made charity obligatory, laying the greatest emphasis on the support of the needy and destitute members of the society. It is thus a sacred duty of the affluent towards destitute members of society. It is incumbent upon the affluent to give part of their wealth to fulfil the needs of the deprived members of the community.

A society can flourish only when its members do not spend all their wealth on the satisfaction of their own desires, but reserve a portion of it for relatives, neighbours, the poor and the needy. A true believer is thus always prepared, after meeting the needs of the family, to assist other people in need of help.

Charity in its broadest sense has been called *sadaqah* in Islam. Such great importance is attached to charity that the month of Ramazan has been fixed for individuals to be trained in the practice of charity. It has therefore been made into an institution in order to give it permanence and regularity. The law of *zakat* takes from the wealthy and gives to the poor, rotates wealth in such a way as to balance social inequality.

Islamic law empowers the Islamic government or community to collect the *zakat* and to keep separate account of it. *Zakat* funds must be spent on the categories specified in the Quran in chapter 2 verse 177. *Zakat* funds basically are to be used for the social welfare of the people which includes education and other essential services.

There are two forms of charity in Islam—obligatory and voluntary, which are respectively called *Zakat* and *Sadaqah*.

Zakat is from the verb *Zakah*, which signifies “to thrive”, “to be wholesome”, “to be pure”, meaning purification. Giving up a portion of one’s wealth, which is in excess of what one needs for one’s own sustenance, is a purifying process.

Deducting the *zakat* amount from one’s earning is a material acknowledgement of the fact that the actual giver is God. And since the giver is God, the recipient is duty-bound to spend it in His cause. In spirit, *zakat* is an act of worship, while in its external form, it is the carrying out of a social service. *Zakat* is thus not just the payment of a tax, but is of great religious significance. Its importance is underscored by the fact that the Quran treats it on par with prayer.

Such great importance is attached to charity that the month of Ramazan has been fixed for individuals to be trained in the practice of charity. It has therefore been made into an institution in order to give it permanence and regularity.

The Quran frequently enjoins believers to perform the prayer and pay the *zakat* and even goes to the extent of saying that one cannot attain righteousness unless one spends out of one’s wealth for the love of God. It also says:

By no means shall you attain
righteousness unless you give
of that which you love. (3: 92)

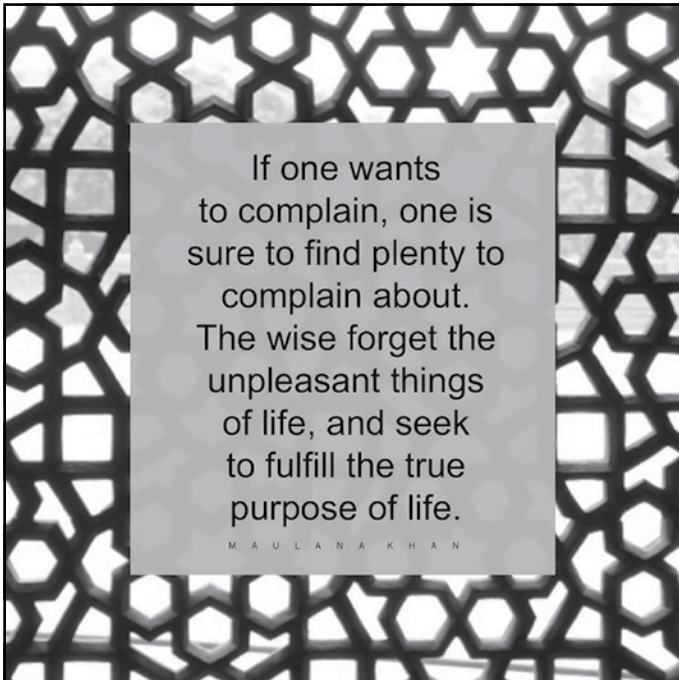
There are many teachings of the Prophet which stress the importance of giving *sadaqah* in the holy month of Ramazan. Therefore, in this month of fasting, almost all those who can afford, help poor people in one way or another.

In the words of the Prophet:

God has ordained that the rich are to pay out of their wealth to an extent sufficient for the needs of the poor, so that if they do not find food and clothing, or if any other need remains to be fulfilled, it would be because the rich are not doing their duty, and for this God will take them to task on the Day of Judgement.□

Dr. Farida Khanam

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DOING ONE'S DUTY

Duty Before Right

A JOURNALIST who had worked for many newspapers shared his experiences which have precious lessons for others. One of his experiences was about a problem which arose about the Friday prayer. It was between him and his manager. He went to his manager and explained to him that he wished to attend the Friday prayer, and that he would work extra hours to compensate for the lost time. His manager gave him permission without a second thought.

The journalist proved true to his word. Every Friday he went for his prayer and compensated for it by doing extra hours of work.

The arrangement worked well, and then came the time for Ramazan. A few days before Ramazan started, the manager himself came to his cabin and said, "Ramazan is about to start and I know you keep your fast. You should adjust your working hours in such a way that you are not subjected to any inconvenience. You have full freedom to come and go as you like. The normal office hours are not applicable to you during the month of Ramazan."

Just as saying our prayers is a duty, doing our job earnestly is also a duty.

Just as saying our prayers is a duty, doing our job earnestly is also a duty. If those who want to have some special privilege realize this fact and perform both the duties with devotion, it will earn them rich dividends. On the one hand, it will enrich their spiritual awakening, bringing them close to God. While on the other, it will create in them such social qualities as will endear them to all those with whom they associate. □



Gentleness

*By gentleness one can win people's hearts.
Harshness only drives people further away.
God's blessings come to the one who behaves
gently instead of harshly.*

RELIGION: A DIVINE, NOT A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

Right Perspective

IF nuclear energy is treated as an American societal phenomenon, it will be taken to mean the manufacture of lethal weapons which destroy life. One is bound, in that case, to be opposed to it. But if nuclear energy is taken to be a natural phenomenon, it will be considered on its own merit. It will not matter how America or any other military power uses it. In spite of being opposed to the atom bomb, one will continue to support atomic energy.

No one thinks of nuclear energy as a social phenomenon of any nuclear power. But there are many who look at religion as a social phenomena. Religion is essentially a divine truth. But anthropology usually treats it as a social phenomenon. For this reason, people have formed a mistaken concept of religion. Worst of all, this method of study prevents the student from being able to distinguish between theory and practice. Many people think of the practice of Muslim nations, for instance, as the true Islam. It is this method of study, which has led people to write books like *The Dagger of Islam* and *Militant Islam* in recent years. The authors of these books saw that Muslims are habitually "daggers drawn" and militant in their demands. So, according to their concept of religion, they came to the conclusion that these were the features that made up Islam.

If one thinks of religion as a truth revealed by God and preserved in the text of Quran and Hadith, then Islam ceases to be a social phenomenon and becomes an ideology.

But if one thinks of religion as a truth revealed by God and preserved in the text of Quran and *Hadith*, then Islam ceases to be a social phenomenon and becomes an ideology. Now one begins to look at Islam in the light of Quran and *Hadith*, instead of in the light of the practice of Muslims. This is the only way to understand Islam as it is with its message of peace and spirituality. □



THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS

Pampering or Hammering

ACCORDING to a *Hadith*, which deals with parenting of children, the Prophet said: "There is no better and superior gift that a father can give to his children than cultivation of good morals." (*Sunan at-Tirmidhi*)

In this *Hadith*, by 'good morals' is meant the best way of leading life. It is about how one's children should live in this world so that when they have grown up they can be truly successful and be an asset to their family and society, instead of becoming a liability.

If parents pamper their children, they give them the worst possible gift. But if they teach them the way to lead a successful life and prepare them for that, they give them the best possible gift. For instance, they should raise them not to complain about others and to always look for where they themselves may have made a mistake or gone wrong and rectify it. They should nurture them in such a way that they develop modesty, not pride or a superiority complex. They should help their children to take responsibility for their mistakes, rather than holding others

If parents pamper their children, they give them the worst possible gift. But if they teach them the way to lead a successful life and prepare them for that, they give them the best possible gift.

responsible. They should teach them to spend their energy and time in useful activities.

Parents must help their children learn that if they do something wrong, they themselves must pay for it and that no one else can do that. Children must learn that they must not complain about others and that doing so is simply a waste of one's time. They must learn to think positively and save themselves completely from negative thinking. They must abstain from bad habits. Moreover, parents should make their children duty-conscious, not rights-conscious. □



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.



A NEW AGE

THE present age is a most unique period of human history. Ancient man would have been unable to even comprehend such a phase of mankind. Many revolutions in human civilization have bestowed man with numerous blessings. Religious persecution has been abolished and replaced by religious freedom, traditional and superstitious beliefs have given way to a rational and scientific era, the age of antagonism and hostility has been put an end to and replaced by an age of inter-dependence. In other words, an era of problems has been eradicated and in its place we have only opportunities and more opportunities everywhere.

But it is strange that Muslims are still living in conflict and controversy. In an age of religious freedom, they feel that they are still in the age of religious persecution. In scientific times, they continue to live with superstitions and irrational beliefs in an age of inter-dependence and collaboration they live with a mindset of hostility. It appears to them that they are under siege from their enemies and that their opponents are conspiring and plotting against them. In the age of opportunities they only seem to be beset by problems everywhere.

Let us examine whether there is room for such thinking by studying the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet and by objectively analyzing the present situation of the world.

THE ERADICATION OF FITNA

Islam emerged in the first quarter of the seventh century. At that time, monarchy was the order of the day all over the world. To the political rulers of that epoch, dissent of any kind, particularly religious free thinking, was anathema, because they saw it as a threat to their power. Therefore, to achieve political consolidation, the monarchs of those days adopted the principle of ideological coercion. Religious persecution thus became a weapon in the hands of the despots, so that no new ideology could be allowed to develop. Strong exception was taken to the growth of any other religion save that approved by the state. The independent thinking so essential for intellectual progress, was thus cruelly suppressed, and that was why, during the long periods of monarchical rule, neither could the sciences flourish, nor could individuals opt for the religion of their choice. Anyone who had the audacity to make an issue of this was likely to face summary execution. The Quran refers thus to the religious oppression of ancient times:

Destroyed were the people of the trench, who lighted the consuming fire and who sat around it watching the believers whom they were torturing. And they had nothing against them, save that they believed in God, the Mighty, the Praiseworthy. (85:4-8)

The human condition of those days is similarly depicted in a Makkan tradition narrated by Khabbab ibn al-Arat: We complained to the Prophet at a time when he was resting in the shade of the Kabah wall. We said to him: "Don't you pray for us to God?" The Prophet replied: "Those who went before you faced such unbearable trials (due to their faith in a religion other than that of the state). One of them would be brought for trial, a pit would be dug for him, then he would be buried in it in a standing posture, with his head above the edge of the pit. Then a saw would be passed through his head until it split into two parts. Yet even such severe trials did not cause him to waver from his faith. People were scraped with iron combs until all their skin came off and the bones of their bodies were exposed. Yet these acts of persecution did not deter them from adhering to their faith. Certainly God's will shall prevail (that is, the age of religious freedom will certainly come) when a traveller will journey from Sana'a to Hadhramawt, (that is, from one region to

God created this world for the purpose of putting mankind to the test. For this purpose to be fulfilled, everyone in this world had to enjoy full freedom of speech and action.

another) without fearing anyone save God. And he will fear no wolf for his sheep. Yet you are in a hurry." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*)

This *Hadith* shows that one of the revolutionary changes to be brought about in the wake of the Prophet's mission was the end of this ancient age of religious persecution and the replacing of it with an age of religious freedom in order to smoothen the path for God's servants to follow His religion. This most significant transformation was to take place as part of a divine plan. That is why the Quran enjoined the Prophet's Companions to pray in advance to God: "Lord, do not lay on us the burden you laid on those before us. Lord, do not charge us with more than we can bear." (2: 286)

Islam is the religion of nature, and in treading its path, it is non-discriminatory, finding room within its scheme of things for every segment of society.

This prayer was revealed by God Himself for the benefit of the believers. It was like a divine ordinance announced in the form of a prayer to be recited by the Companions. This means God, who is the controller of history, had decreed a change in this coercive political system of ancient times. Then the age of religious freedom would be ushered where people would be free to believe in whatever they had conviction in, which till that point had been seriously hindered by the prevalent religious oppression.

Religious coercion through persecution was totally against the creation plan of God. God created this world for the purpose of putting mankind to the test. For this purpose to be fulfilled, everyone in this world had to enjoy full freedom of speech and action. If people were divested of their freedom, the very purpose of the test would be defeated. Therefore, God granted special help to the believers, so that they might put an end to a system which had suppressed the freedom essential to the divine test in this world.

This means *fitna*, or the ancient political coercive system, had been dealt a severe blow during the period of the 'Pious Caliphate' itself but, like many other major historical revolutions, this new phase only very gradually reached its culmination. In the wake of the revolution in the first phase of Islam, religious freedom took a decisive course in history, spurred on in the initial stages by Muslim action, and in the later stages by the active participation of non-Muslim nations. In the first half of the twentieth century, firstly through the League of Nations and later through the United Nations, all the nations of the world unanimously

declared that religious freedom was a fundamental right for all, and could not under any circumstances be abrogated.

THE AGE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The first stage of the cessation of *fitna*, which brought with it the dawn of religious freedom, was accomplished in Arabia. This development took place during the lifetime of the Prophet. During his last days, on the occasion of his final Haj, the Prophet Muhammad, may peace be upon him, preached a sermon, generally known as the Sermon of the Last Pilgrimage, in the presence of all of his Companions. One of the points in his address on which the Prophet laid emphasis was that God had sent him "as a mercy to all mankind," and that this being so, they should communicate this message of peace to all people everywhere.

In obedience to this injunction given by the Prophet towards the end of his life, his Companions travelled far and wide beyond the boundaries of Arabia. Indeed, they spent the rest of their lives carrying out their Prophet's command. Thereafter, their successors, as well as the disciples of these successors, continued to make it their mission to disseminate the teachings of Islam, to the point where finally, the message of Islam had reached the greater part of the known, inhabited world of that age. This method of conveying the message from beginning to end was carried out in an entirely peaceful manner.

The Quran has clearly stated that, for believers, political power is a gift from God, and not a goal to be striven for.

Wherever there is political power, the element of coercion cannot be far away: political confrontations must, therefore, be avoided at all costs if the process of *dawah*, that is the task of conveying of Islam, is to be set in motion and continued in an atmosphere of freedom. That is to say that they had to abandon the path of political confrontation in favour of continuing their activities in non-political fields, such as education, *dawah*, the service of the Quran and *Hadith*, etc. The Quran has clearly stated that, for believers, political power is a gift from God, and not a goal to be striven for.

THE PEACEFUL PROPAGATION OF ISLAM

A major aim of the revolution brought about by the Prophet and his Companions was to remove all obstacles in the path of calling people to God so that such conducive conditions would prevail as would

encourage people to practise God's religion and invite others to the same path. This process had to be continued from generation to generation.

The first stage of this revolution was marked by the coercive system being brought to an end, ushering in the dawn of religious freedom in the world. The second stage was embarked upon, when, by availing of the advantages of this freedom, Muslims disseminated Islam at the universal level. Now, Muslims are in the third and final stage of their history, when the progress of religious freedom has reached its zenith. Muslims have to continue this task of conveying the message to people and it is imperative that they do so by adherence to peaceful methods.

THE ROLE OF NON-MUSLIMS IN ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT

Islam is the religion of nature, and in treading its path, it is non-discriminatory, finding room within its scheme of things for every segment of society.

In this world any natural process begins with the involvement of different elements—as happened in the case of Islam. Humanity as a whole is an interdependent body and Islam is not an exception. Islam

Islam is an ideology aimed at human development, and no process of human development can endure without involving humanity at large.

is an ideology aimed at human development, and no process of human development can endure without involving humanity at large. Islamic history contains many examples of the role played by non-Muslims in the development of Islam. This principle of non-Muslim involvement in Islamic development can also be extended from an individual level to the level of an entire group.

In the present day context, Western civilization is an appropriate example. Although Western civilization developed in non-Muslim societies without any direct contribution from Muslim minds, it is helpful for Islam in many aspects. For example, it is this Western civilization that finally ended religious persecution and opened the door for religious freedom. Similarly, it is this Western civilization, which has developed the modern means of communication that has made it possible for Muslims to convey the message on a global scale. Also, modern scientific discoveries made in the West have paved the way to proving the beliefs of Islam on a scientific basis.

In previous times, it was assumed that the message of Islam, or religion for that matter, could be supported only by arguments that were inferential in nature and not by arguments that were direct. But modern science, in bringing human thought from a macrocosmic level to a microcosmic level, has made it possible to accept that inferential reasoning is as valid as direct reasoning. This development has allowed Islam to put forth its points on the same level as scientific theories are proven.

From these examples, it is clear that Muslims as well as others have contributed towards the Islamic development.

This aspect of a role for those other than Muslims, in the development of Islam serves a moral end as well. It makes Muslims sympathetic towards the rest of the world so that the hearts of Muslims are filled with love for others instead of hate, enmity and distrust. The contribution of non-Muslims to Islam has not been of a temporary nature. It has continued throughout Islamic history. In present times these contributions made by non-Muslims, especially in the field of scientific discoveries, have been far greater than ever before. □



*A wise man is one
who deliberately
forgets the
unpleasant
memories of the
past, who does not
let his mind
become a jungle of
bitter thoughts.*

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

THERE IS AN ENORMOUS ENERGY RESERVOIR IN YOU

Mind Power

SCOTTISH author and reformer Samuel Smiles observed in his book 'Self-Help', that 'It is not ease but effort, not facility but difficulty that makes man.' This statement is based on a natural fact and history has proved its veracity. All those men who attained greatness, regardless of which walks of life they came from, were the products of difficulty and not of facility. They faced challenges and emerged as super achievers.

But the question is, why is it that difficulty has a greater role to play in the building of a personality than facility? The reason is traceable to one of the laws of nature. According to this law it is the mind that is the master of the human personality. It controls all of our activities.

Studies show that all our performances depend totally on our minds.

It is the mind that is the master of the human personality, as it controls all of our activities. Studies show that all our performances depend totally on our minds.

The fact is that all of our actions, big or small, are directly related to our minds. It is the mind that directs all the activities of our personality. The human mind is greater than all of the great things of the universe; it has amazing qualities. The mind has unlimited reserves of energy. When we decide to do anything, the mind at once releases energy and we perform with the aid of this energy. The mind is the prime source of energy and whatever we do can only be done with the help of this energy.

If we choose to do some easy task, then the mind will release less amount of energy. And, if we decide to do some difficult or great task, then the mind will release greater amount of energy.

The building of a personality depends on one's own efforts. If one is an easy-going person then one is bound to receive less energy from this mind and the result will be a weak personality. If one is ambitious and choose to embark on a great task, then certainly the mind will release greater amount of energy, resulting in the development of a strong personality.

Everyone is born with the same mind that is full of energy. But some people fail to utilize their energy and die without developing their

personalities. The other kind of people are those who set a great task as their goal. Thus, their minds release a greater amount of energy for the performance of this task, and so they become super achievers.

Man himself is the master of his destiny. It all depends on how much a person has unfolded his mind and how much energy the mind has released. One achieves greater or smaller successes in life depending on how much energy one's mind releases. Every man is a self-made man. But the quantum of success depends on one's own planning. Wise planning makes one an achiever while unwise planning makes one lag behind in life.

The mind of man is like an energy reservoir. If one's target is ordinary then the mind will open the door of energy on a small scale. But, if the target is a high one, the mind will open the gate of energy on a larger scale. It is this difference that decides the level of one's achievement. Try to utilize your mind, and you will certainly achieve anything you want to in life. □

Man himself is the master of his destiny. It all depends on how much a person has unfolded his mind and how much energy the mind has released.



“ The act of tolerance is not a matter of compulsion: it results naturally from the doer being of an elevated moral calibre. ”

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

MISSIONS AND MOVEMENTS

Seek the Help of God

THERE are two types of organized movements or missions. One type is that which has a popular base. In this case, people have a shared concern for a particular issue or cause and launch a movement for it. Leaders of such movements mobilize support by rousing people's sentiments. Often, their aim is to draw large crowds. For the success of such a movement, it is thought that impressive public speeches do the work. And so, people who launch such movements, do not find it necessary to turn to God and pray to Him for any help.

Relief work, social work, community work, rehabilitation work etc., are causes for which those who are engaged in them already feel very strongly about. It is thought that it is enough to issue a call to people to lend their support to such efforts to succeed. That in itself would draw people to participate in them in large numbers, because they already have great enthusiasm for these issues. When a function is organized on such issues, it turns into a 'grand affair'.

The work of calling people to God is just the opposite of this. *Dawah* that is calling people to God which is akin to calling people to be God's worshippers and people's well wishers is such a task that people do not have great enthusiasm for it beforehand.

The task of calling people to God is something that goes against popular taste. Only such people will join this sort of movement who are humble and sincere.

It is something that goes against popular taste. Because of this, there is no pre-existing crowd ready to take up this work. Only such people will join this sort of movement who are humble and sincere. Such people are not concentrated in one place. They are scattered in different places. It is not within human capacity to bring them together and form a team. That is why this task from its very beginning, becomes a movement that is based on asking God for help. From the very first day the caller has to supplicate to God.

Every movement has a certain psyche. Every movement's psyche shapes the mentality of those who are active in it. For instance, 'people's movements' are people-oriented. Their psyche is such that their leaders say every sort of thing that serves to rouse the emotions of people so that they are drawn to support the movement. In contrast to this, a *dawah* is a God-oriented movement, it is a mission of peace and love

for people. Its psyche is such that it stresses maximum possible on the caller turning to God in all humility to supplicate to God to shower His blessings on everyone. In this work God is accorded the position which in other movements, is accorded to the cause.

In the call towards God, the caller has to be a spiritual human being and a peaceful soul first. He should be a person who contributes positively towards the good of humanity. He should believe one hundred percent that all belong to God. He cannot afford to think in terms of just one community. He cannot afford to categorize in terms of superior or inferior, rich or poor.

Further, for this mission it is necessary for those who are in it to cleanse themselves of negative thinking and replace it with positive thinking. They must learn to love people, in place of resenting or hating them. They must forget and forgive the oppression of others, and, on a unilateral basis, become their well-wishers. They must set about doing this without any worldly motive and solely with enthusiasm for the rewards in the Hereafter. They must completely abandon thinking in terms of 'they and us' and consider the entire mankind as a global family.

While amassing a large following or mobilizing huge crowds, organizing big rallies and collecting donations are considered the indicators of success of a 'people's movement', the indicator of success of peaceful *dawah* work is based on God's help, as the Quran says: "God will surely help him who helps His cause." (22: 40). The angels will join such efforts. □

In the call towards God, the caller has to be a spiritual human being and a peaceful soul first. He should be a person who contributes positively towards the good of humanity.



Partners

Men and women play complementary roles to each other. They have different spheres of activity. This doesn't mean that one is inferior to the other. They are different in role, but equal in respect.

MISUNDERSTANDING

Different Perspectives

THE following conversation between two gentlemen on the train is worth analyzing to be able to understand the attitude of people about Islam. This conversation was between a Hindu and a Muslim. The Hindu said, "It seems that Islam is an intolerant religion." The Muslim replied saying, "That is a complete misunderstanding. Islam, on the contrary, teaches tolerance." Both advanced arguments in favour of their separate viewpoints. The Hindu cited an instance of Muslims in his locality becoming provoked by the preparations being made by Hindus to take out a procession. A clash had ensued and the procession was stopped. The Muslim passenger, however, simply recited verses from the Quran to prove his point.

As the conversation proceeded it occurred that both of them, judging by appearances, were serious and sincere. Neither seemed biased. Then why was it that their views differed so widely? Considerable reflection

If you want to avoid having your behaviour misinterpreted by others, you must refrain from reacting altogether in negative situations, even if you feel that you would be completely justified in doing so.

led to the conclusion that it was traceable to the difference in their outlook. The Hindu formed his opinion of Islam by judging the behaviour of Muslims. The Muslim, on the other hand, quoted extensively from the Quran presenting the content of the verses as if Muslims actually followed the code of ethics enshrined in the scriptures.

A proper and more sincere approach would be to engage in thorough self-appraisal before sitting in judgement on others. Before attempting to correct others' faults, one should set about rectifying one's own. It is the gap between principle and practice that is the main reason for misunderstanding. Once this gap is eliminated, misunderstanding will

of itself disappear. Moreover, if one wants to be certain of not being misunderstood, one must be ready to show restraint in the face of provocation. One must not react negatively, even if it means some initial sacrifice of one's self-esteem.

Imagine what happens if someone abuses you and you retaliate by throwing a stone at him. Later, while reporting this incident, the wrongdoer will mention only the fact that you threw a stone at

him. He will leave out all mention of his own bad behaviour. The misunderstanding truly created is then well-nigh impossible to set right. If you want to avoid having your behaviour misinterpreted by others, you must refrain from reacting altogether in negative situations, even if you feel that you would be completely justified in doing so. In that way, no one can make the kind of spiteful allegations against you from which misunderstandings so quickly arise. □



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FROM THE SPIRITUAL TREE

There is a tree beside my house. I call it the 'Spiritual Tree'. I derive spiritual inspiration from it. A tree is an ever-growing being that was initially a seed possessing the potential of becoming a full-grown tree. A seed takes food from the universe around it and then grows into a tree. The same is true with spirituality, the desire for which is intrinsic to, and an integral part of, the very nature of every human being. To realize this spirituality, Man must derive spiritual food from the universe around him. A tree converts carbon-dioxide into oxygen; a spiritual person is one who can take positive lessons from negative situations. From this perspective, a tree is an embodiment of a spiritual personality. —Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



GOD IS THE GREATEST

THE phrase *Allahu Akbar* ('God is Great') is the most important part of the Islamic form of ritual prayer. If you add up the number of times this phrase is used in the *azan* (the call to prayer), and while performing the ritual prayers five times a day, it comes to around 300 times every day! This declaration of God being the greatest is the phrase that is heard and uttered the most number of times in a Muslim's life.

This shows that in Islam the most important thing is that a person should discover the greatness of God. The glory and greatness of God should be the most important part of his consciousness. God's greatness should be an integral part of his consciousness in such a way that under no condition should he lose awareness of it.

The phrase "God is Great" enjoys the status of a master-stroke in a person's life. If you truly discover God, you will experience the most enormously possible positive transformation in your life. You will be transformed into a completely new person. God will become the only focus of your thinking. Your life will become a truly God-centred one. God will become your sole concern. Everything other than God

will become secondary for you. You will stop thinking in materialistic terms. Instead of thinking on communal lines, your thinking will be shaped on the basis of certain principles. You will seek success in the Hereafter. You will be fully cleansed of negative thinking. You will become modest and will be freed from arrogance.

In a sense, the phrase *Allahu Akbar* speaks of a belief. In another sense, it embodies a complete way of life for a person. In fact, *Allahu Akbar* is the essence of faith. □

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DUTY TO PARENTS

Moral Obligation

AT SEVERAL places the Quran exhorts us to be on our best behaviour with parents. Even when scolded by them, we are commanded to refrain from angry retorts; we should never be found lacking in loving them or in serving them. We should at all times conduct ourselves with the utmost propriety, regardless of how our parents treat us.

According to a *Hadith*, a man approached the Prophet and asked, "O Prophet, who is more deserving of my good behaviour?" The Prophet said, "Your mother." The man then asked, "Who after that?" The Prophet again said, "Your mother". The man repeated the question and the Prophet again said "Your mother". When the man asked the Prophet the fourth time, then he said "Your father". (*Sahih Muslim*)

Serving parents enables one to look at all human beings with love, it will inculcate the attitude of honouring them thus making one to serve humanity at large.

There are many teachings which inform us that after God it is to parents that one has obligations more than to anyone else. One reason is that individuals receive the maximum benefits from parents. As such, it is incumbent upon a person when he grows

up to serve his parents to the best of his ability. He should come to their assistance in their old age as they came to his assistance in his childhood.

Another reason is that serving parents enables one to look at all human beings with love, it will inculcate the attitude of honouring them thus making one to serve humanity at large.

The Quran in chapter 17 verse 23 and 24 enjoins us thus: "Your Lord has commanded that you should worship none but Him and show kindness to your parents. If either or both of them attain old age with you, say no word of contempt to them and do not rebuke them, but always speak gently to them and treat them with humility and tenderness and say, " Lord, be merciful to them both, as they raised me up when I was little." □



ONLY ONE AUTHORITY

A Necessity

THERE is a lengthy saying of the Prophet of Islam in the corpus of Hadith, a portion of which reads as follows: "Were Moses alive, he would have no choice but to follow me." (*Shuab al-Iman, al-Bayhaqi*)

The *ulema* (scholars) have generally taken this *Hadith* in the sense of superiority of the Prophet Muhammad. But this is not correct. This concept of superiority of one prophet over another contradicts the Quran and *Hadith*. The Quran (2: 285) says:

We do not differentiate between any of His messengers.

The same thing is said in a *Hadith* in these words: "Don't give superiority to any prophet amongst God's prophets." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*)

The fact is that in the above-mentioned *Hadith* there is no mention of personal superiority. It talks about a general principle—which is that authority is always indivisible. Discipline demands that the authority be just one. Wherever the authority is two or more order will not be maintained. In the time of Prophet Moses, there were two prophets—Moses and Aaron (or Harun). But Moses alone had the position of authority, not Aaron. The task of Aaron was to confirm the veracity of Moses as the Quran says in 28: 34.

Discipline demands that the authority be just one. Wherever the authority is two or more order will not be maintained.

The belief about the superiority of prophets is without any doubt alien to the Quran and *Hadith*. There is certainly one difference among the prophets. This difference is in terms of role, not in terms of superiority. In this sense, all prophets are models for us. Emulating the prophets is in terms of method. As far as religious beliefs and the principles of religion are concerned, the beliefs and principles of religion of all the prophets were the same. □



Contentment gives us the blessing of a mind at peace.

IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Natural Behaviour

TIME and again we read news of disasters real or just averted or some other type of dangerous situations and how people later describe their feelings and reactions. One of the most common thing to hear is that people call out to God for protection.

Experience enlightens us that when people face a critical situation—when they feel that they are simply helpless to handle it—they cry out to God. This proves that the concept of God is interwoven in human nature. Every human being is potentially aware of God's existence.

The purpose of inviting people to God is to turn this potential into a reality. Inviting others towards God is not something separate from the human personality. When one is called towards God, one is actually being called towards something that is part of one's own nature.

Man has an innate need for something to depend upon in this world, something which he can look up to. To believe in God is to look up to Him alone.

Man has an innate need for something to depend upon in this world, something which he can look up to. To believe in God is to look up to Him alone, while disbelief is to live in veneration of others besides Him.

In ancient times, awe of natural phenomena, such as the moon and the sun dominated people's lives. In the modern age, however, man has become more materialistic, finding fulfilment in such things as wealth, and the greatness of other human beings. Whatever

the object of his veneration may be, man is satisfying an instinctive urge in looking up to these things, and depending upon them. There is a natural urge to seek the truth.

To truly believe in God is to find the true answer to the human search for a superior. It is to see through superficial forms, the ultimate reality that lies hidden within all things.

A believer is one who is not beguiled by the outward splendour of worldly things. He realizes that everything has been created by God. He is not overawed by things of material grandeur, because he knows that they, like him, have been created by God. He does not look to mortals for fulfilment of his needs, for he knows that they themselves are helpless before God—that all are in truth His humble servants.

He continues his journey seeking and passing by all creation till he reaches the Creator himself.

A believer is one who acknowledges that everything is from God. Seeing that he has no power in this world, he looks to God for help and protection. The beauty of this world serves to remind him of God's beauty; the greatness of natural phenomena impresses on him the greatness of the One who created them. So absorbed is he in the glory of God that he loves nothing more than to spend his time in pure thoughts and actions.

To believe in God is to see the invisible force behind visible objects. This requires special vision, enabling one to penetrate superficial forms and perceive the reality of all things. One endowed with such vision sees God everywhere; he looks only to God as great. He submits entirely to God, and trusts in Him alone. So engrossed in God's overpowering greatness does he become that all worldly things fade into insignificance in his sight. □

A believer is one who acknowledges that everything is from God. Seeing that he has no power in this world, he looks to God for help and protection.



If you face any kind of undesirable experience from another person you should try to find out your own weakness that gave the other party the opportunity to do so.

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

ACCEPTANCE OF OUR PRAYER REQUESTS

God's Domain

A YOUNG man had a feeling that though he keeps supplicating to God for solutions to his problems, they were not being answered and his problems were not being solved. He felt hopeless and helpless.

This man was one of many who prayed to God for material things and for solutions to economic problems. When such people see that their problems are not solved in the way they want them to be, they lose hope.

If our supplications do not appear to be accepted, we must know that this is what God wills. God knows better what is good for His servants.

Supplication to God (*dua*) is a form of worship. The acceptance of these supplications—we must remember—depends on God's will, not our desire.

In this world, material things are like examination question papers. It is God who decides who will be tested with which examination paper. What we might prefer in this regard makes no difference whatsoever. A student appearing for an examination cannot demand that the examination paper should be as he wants it to be. The paper is

set not by him, but, rather, by the educational authorities. Likewise, the examinations that God sets for us in this world to face are decided by Him. We can't expect them to be as we like.

Given this, we should continue to beseech God, turning to Him with our requests, but at the same time we should leave the matter of the acceptance of our prayer requests entirely to Him. If our supplications do not appear to be accepted, we must know that this is what God wills. God knows better what is good for His servants. Often, we are concerned only with our desires and do not really know what is truly good for us.

We should learn to willingly accept whatever God has given us. And as for other things, we should pray, "O God! Please give me what is best for me!" □



NEGOTIATING SOCIAL LIFE

Give and Take

TO be able to lead a respectable life in society there is a necessary condition. And that is you must become someone who is beneficial to others, a 'giver', or at least a 'no-problem person' as far as others are concerned. Other than these two options, there is no other way for you to lead a respectable life in society. Those who think that there is a third way only go on to create trouble in society and for themselves, too.

Social life is always based on the principle of give-and-take. If you are contributing positively to society, society will regard you with respect. And if you think you are not in a position to contribute anything to society, at least you can become a 'no-problem' person for others.

If you become a giver as far as others are concerned, you are helping society progress. Even if you simply become a 'no-problem' person, you are still playing a social role—by not placing any obstacle in the progress of society. In the former case you are directly helping society to progress. In the latter case, you are doing this indirectly.

But those who are neither givers nor 'no problem' people only become a burden on society. Although, according to the conventional law these people may not be criminals, but in terms of the etiquette of human life they are. Although the courts of this world will not sentence them to punishment, in the court of nature, they will be considered guilty of an enormous moral crime. □

***If you are
contributing
positively to society,
society will regard
you with respect.***



*Learning from the mistakes
of others is the easiest
way of not repeating that
mistake yourselves.*

AN EXPERT IN GEMS

Uncut Jewels

IN a small town in South Africa, a man spotted a boy in a field playing with a strange-looking stone. He took the stone from the boy, and when he showed it to a lapidary—an expert in gems—he discovered that it was actually a very large diamond!

You need to have the requisite expertise to examine precious stones and estimate their value. You need the same sort of ability when it comes to human beings too. Innumerable people are born into this world, but they do not have the same abilities. Some of them are born with a potential for special skills and abilities. But these skills and abilities are hidden. They don't loudly announce themselves. They need a 'lapidary' to recognize them and to give them the opportunity to express themselves.

There are two ways in which a person's hidden jewels can be recognized. One way is that the person becomes so aware of himself that he can discover his hidden potentials. The other way is for someone who truly cares for him to come into his life and to recognize his jewels and to help him recognize them too.

To realise the jewels hidden inside you, you need to be extremely realistic.

Both these options aren't easily available, though. To realize the jewels hidden inside you, you need to be extremely realistic. And to be able to recognize the jewels hidden inside someone else and to help him realize them, you need to be genuinely concerned about his well-being.

Experience tells us that these two qualities are exceedingly rare among people. And so, it very often happens that people who are born with hidden special capacities and abilities never go on to develop and express them in their lives. Sometimes, it is because they fail to discover these themselves. In other cases, it is because they do not find a sincere well-wisher who can help them draw out their latent potential. □



LIFE AFTER DEATH

Soul Eternal

IS there any life after death? The answer to this tends, nowadays, to be in the negative because we are so used to thinking of life in terms of all the material elements of which it is apparently composed. We think of life developing when all the aforesaid elements are arranged in a particular order, and, as a corollary to that, we think of death as shattering that order and, in consequence, obviating all possibility of life after death.

T.R. Miles regards the concept of resurrection as a symbolic truth and refuses to accept it literally:

It seems to me that there is a good case for regarding 'People have experiences after death' as a literal, factually significant assertion capable in principle of being verified or falsified by experience. The only difficulty, in that case, is that, until we die, there is no means of discovering the true answer. Speculation, of course, is possible. It might be argued, for instance, that according to neurology awareness of the space occupied by our bodies (and of spatial relationships in general) is possible only when the brain is functioning normally, and that after death, when the brain disintegrates, no such awareness will be possible.

But there are certain other assumptions which suggest that disintegration of material particles in a body does not bring life to an end. And these assumptions carry considerable weight. We should be prepared to recognize that life has a distinct and independent identity which survives in spite of the change in material particles. It is known that the human body is composed of certain specific elements called cells. These are the fundamental units of living things, and are composed of microscopic particles with a highly complicated structure. A man is made up of more than a billion cells. It is as if cells were the tiny bricks of the human construction. But whereas, real bricks remain the same as they were at the time of building, human cells undergo a constant process of transformation known as metabolism.

There are certain assumptions which suggest that disintegration of material particles in a body does not bring life to an end. Life has a distinct and independent identity which survives in spite of the change in material particles.

When a machine is in operation, it undergoes a gradual process of deterioration; in like manner, our body 'machine' is in a continual state of deterioration. Its 'bricks' are constantly being eroded and destroyed in the normal course of our daily lives. But we compensate for this loss by taking in food. Once digested, this produces various forms of cells which counterbalance any physical deficiency. Our bodies are, in fact, a compound of cells that is always in the process of change. It is like a large river that is always filled with water, without the water ever remaining the same. At every moment the old water is being replaced by the new. The container remains the same, but the water flows on.

Our bodies are so constantly undergoing changes that a time comes when all of the 'bricks' in our bodies have been eroded and replaced by new ones. During childhood, this is a fairly rapid process. However,

Our bodies are like a large river that is always filled with water, without the water ever remaining the same. At every moment the old water is being replaced by the new. The container remains the same, but the water flows on.

as one ages, this process slows down day by day. Over an entire lifetime, on an average, all of the body cells are renewed every ten years. This process of the death and decomposition of the body goes on continually, whereas the inner man survives in his original form. At all stages of his life, he thinks of himself as being the same 'man' that he was in the past, and this, in spite of the fact that no feature of his, eyes, ears, nose, hands, legs, hair, nails, etc.—has remained the same.

Now if, along with the death of the body, the man inhabiting it died too, he should be diminished or depleted in some way by this total replacement of his cells. But this is not so. He remains quite distinct from and independent of the body, and retains his

identity notwithstanding the death and decay of the body. Man is like a river. And the human personality is like an island in it, unaffected by the ceaseless flow of the cells. That is why a scientist has regarded life, or the human personality, as an independent entity that remains constant in the face of continuous change. He asserts that 'personality is changelessness in change.' Now if death means the end of the body, we might well say that whenever there is such a total replacement of cells in the body, the man actually dies on each occasion. And that if we see him moving about alive, he has really been resurrected. That is, a fifty-year old man would have experienced death at least five times within the short span of his life. If a man does not experience bodily

'death' five times in a row at ten-year intervals, how are we justified in believing that, on the ultimate occasion, he will have ceased quite finally to live?

Those who find this argument unacceptable—and modern philosophy is, in the main, opposed to the concept of the soul as an independent entity—will insist that the mind, or the internal entity, that is called man does not, in fact, enjoy any independent existence. Man is simply the outcome of the interaction between the body and the outer world. All feelings and thoughts in man develop in the course of a material process, just as friction between two pieces of metal causes heat. Sir James Jeans is of the view that consciousness is merely a function or a process, and contemporary philosophers maintain that consciousness is nothing more than a nervous response to external stimuli. According to this concept, once a man dies, that is, when he biologically disintegrates, there can be no question of his survival, because the nerve centres which interact with the outside world and produce a set of responses which we call 'life' no longer exist after death. The concept of life after death, viewed in this way, appears irrational and unconnected with reality.

It must be pointed out at this juncture, that if this is the sum total of man's existence, we should certainly be in a position to create a man—a conscious, living being. Today we are highly knowledgeable about the elements which make up the human body. All of these are, obtainable in abundance, beneath the surface of the earth and in the atmosphere. We have examined in great detail the internal system of the body with a microscopic 'eye' and we are very well aware of how the skeleton, blood vessels, tissues, etc. have been constructed. Moreover, we have the services of so many expert artists who can copy the human body to perfection. If the opponents of the 'soul'—concept are truly convinced that their views are correct, they should prove their point by constructing 'human' bodies, placing them in sets of circumstances where they receive the correct number and type of stimuli and then demonstrating to the rest of the world how these inert bodies begin to move about and talk in response to their environment. The plain fact that no man can create another man in this artificial way, that no man can breathe the spark of life into a lifeless lump of flesh, should

The process of the death and decomposition of the body goes on continually, whereas the inner man survives in his original form.

be enough to convince them that there is a great deal more to life than permutations and combinations of cellular forms.

Apart from concerning ourselves with the probability of survival after death, we must also look at this problem from the angle of what purpose is served by having faith in such a concept. Religion makes it plain that life is not as Nietzsche maintained, just a blind and meaningless cycle of life, death, and resurrection, like an hour-glass being emptied of its sand, time and time again, for no particular reason: it is, on the contrary, a time of trial for the whole of mankind, and the afterlife is the time of reward or punishment. The purpose of belief in such religious tenets, therefore, is to strengthen the moral fibre of society by inculcating the fear of God in the individuals—of which it is composed.

No man can create another man in an artificial way, no man can breathe the spark of life into a lifeless lump of flesh.

The advent of the life hereafter assumes a high degree of credibility when we find, astonishingly, that the daily deeds of each and every human individual are being instantaneously recorded throughout the universe at all times. The human personality manifests itself in three ways: intentions, words and actions. All three manifestations are being preserved in their entirety, all being imprinted on a cosmic screen in such a manner as to make their precise reproduction

an instant possibility. No detail of one's life on earth will remain a secret. It will be possible to know who opted for the path of God and who opted to follow Satan, who drew their inspiration from the angels and who trod the ways of evil.

Since we soon forget the thoughts that pass through our minds, we imagine that they have been erased from our memories forever. However, when we dream of some long forgotten event, or when someone suffering from a mental disorder begins to reveal things that relate to a distant and not even dimly remembered past, it becomes evident that the human memory is not confined just to that part of existence which is consciously experienced. One may not be conscious of certain compartments of the human memory, but they nevertheless exist. Various experiments have proved that all of our thoughts are preserved forever in the form in which they first existed. And even if we so desired, we could not eradicate them from our memory. Such investigations have revealed that the human personality does not have its basis only in the conscious part of the brain. On the contrary, there is another major part of the human personality which exists below the

level of consciousness. Freud dubbed this part the subconscious, or unconscious. The human personality is rather like an iceberg whose tip—one-tenth part of its total volume—is visible above the ocean's surface, while the rest—a massive 90%—lies submerged, and therefore hidden from view. It is in this hidden part, the subconscious, that all of our thoughts and intentions are preserved. In his thirty-first lecture, Freud elaborates:

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

This theory of the subconscious has gained general acceptance in psychology, this in turn, giving credence to the idea that every good or bad thought that comes to mind is indelibly engraved upon the human psyche. The passage of time or different sets of circumstances do not cause even the minutest changes to occur. This process of thought registration goes on independently, and irrespective of human likes or dislikes.

Freud, however, failed to take stock of nature's purpose in taking such great pains to preserve a record of our intentions and their outcome within the subconscious. He thus felt the necessity of inviting philosophers to ponder the matter. But when we look at this phenomenon in relation to the concept of the life hereafter, we immediately grasp its meaningfulness. It clearly

Religion makes it plain that life is not just a blind and meaningless cycle of life, death, and resurrection, like an hour-glass being emptied of its sand, time and time again, for no particular reason.

shows the advent of the life hereafter as a distinct probability—as the time when every single human being will be confronted with a complete and accurate record of his deeds on earth. His own entity will be evidence of what the thoughts and intentions were which guided him in the course of his worldly existence.

“We verily created man and we know the promptings of his soul, and are closer to him than his jugular vein.” (THE QURAN 50: 16)

Let us now consider what happens to man’s words.

“Each word he utters shall be noted down by a vigilant guardian”. (50: 18)

No matter whether his words are sweet or bitter, true or false, good or evil, each and every one of them is being cosmically recorded, and man shall be held accountable for them, for this record will be consulted on the Day of Judgement.

Whenever a man moves his tongue to utter some words, this movement produces waves in the air, just as a stone dropped into water will produce ripples. If you enclose an electric bell inside an airtight glass jar, pump out all the air so that the bell is in a vacuum and pass an electric current through it, it will ring, but the sound will be almost inaudible, because the sound waves from the ringing bell, cannot pass through the vacuum to our ears. The only sound which will be audible will be that which comes via the wires carrying the electric current, and it will be so extremely faint as to be almost undetectable. It is only when waves can pass freely through the air to strike the tympanum of the ear that the aural devices can pick them up and transmit

Various experiments have proved that all of our thoughts are preserved, forever in the form in which they first existed. And even if we so desired, we could not eradicate them from our memory.

them to the brain, thus making it possible for us to understand what we hear, whether it be the sound of a bell ringing, a bird chirping or a series of spoken words.

It has been proved that sound waves once produced continue to exist for ever in the atmosphere. Although our technology is not yet so advanced as to enable us to catch and reproduce these sounds, science is making such rapid and gigantic leaps forward that it will only be a matter of a very short time before we are actually able to do so. It has been accepted, in theory, that we shall have the physical means to listen to the sounds produced in ancient times, just as we receive the sounds relayed from

broadcasting stations and have them made intelligible for us by radios. The obstacles to the actual catching of sounds from ancient times are fewer than the difficulties of separating individual sounds from the complex mixture of noises produced at any given moment. The same difficulties occur in broadcasting. There are hundreds of radio stations all over the world simultaneously relaying innumerable and vastly different kinds of programmes at the enormous speed of one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles per second. One might imagine that the sounds received would be confusing and incomprehensible because of their speed, huge numbers and widespread diffusion. But this is not so, because the different radio-stations broadcast their respective programmes on different wave lengths, some on short waves, some on long, and we have only to adjust our radios to the appropriate meter-band and we can listen to any desired programme without the interference of other sounds.

Life hereafter is the time when every single human being will be confronted with a complete and accurate record of his deeds on earth.

The technique of segregating natural sounds has yet to be evolved. But the very fact that techniques already exist by which radio transmitters and receivers separate artificial sounds is a strong indication that sometime in the future, we shall be in a position to hear distinctly separate, naturally produced sounds. Then we shall have a first-hand account of all periods of human history through the medium of the sounds produced at that time. Once such a possibility is accepted, it becomes quite comprehensible that, man's speech having been perfectly recorded in nature, everyone will be called to account for his deeds and misdeeds.

It came to light that when a former Prime Minister of Iran was placed under detention, a recording machine, which kept working round the clock, was secretly introduced into his room, so that every single word that he uttered, would be recorded and could be used in evidence against him when he was brought into court. In a similar fashion, God's invisible angels are constantly hovering around every single individual on the face of this earth, recording with unflinching accuracy upon a cosmic disc his every thought, word and deed.

How are our deeds actually documented? Scientific studies have shown, surprisingly, that all our actions, whether in public or in a private, in broad daylight or in pitch darkness, linger in that atmosphere in

photographic form. These photographs may be resorted to at any time to lay bare the innermost secrets of an entire life.

Recent investigations have shown that all objects continuously emit heat waves, (provided the surroundings are of a lower temperature) no matter whether it is in darkness or in light, in motion or at rest. For instance, suppose that after sitting in a room, a person gets up and goes out of the room, the heat waves emitted by the person's body while in the room will still be there. With the help of certain thermal imaging devices a complete 'photograph' of the person can then be taken. Since this device functions by means of infrared rays, which can penetrate darkness, it does not matter whether the room was in darkness or in

light. However, the thermal imaging devices in use at present are only powerful enough to register heat waves emitted up to a few hours beforehand.

All our actions can be documented on a cosmic scale, just as all the actions of actors and actresses on a film set are caught and registered on film.

In the near future, we shall be able to watch history on the screen. And it is quite probable that such a series of strange facts will come to light as will drastically change our entire conception of the past.

The remarkable performance and results of such devices show us that all our actions can be documented on a cosmic scale, just as all the actions of actors and actresses on a film set are caught and registered on film by the fast-moving, sharply-focused cameras of the film world. Whether you strike someone or help a poor fellow to lift up his burden; whether you crusade for a noble cause or stoop to collaborate in the evil designs of others; whether you are in the light, in motion or at rest, all of your actions are being imprinted on a cosmic screen. This is happening every second of every minute in every home. There is no way of stopping it.

Once a story is filmed, it can be repeated on the screen even at far-off places and after long intervals. It is watched by people as if they were on the spot, witnessing everything as if it was actually happening there and then. In exactly the same way, a total picture of an individual's good or bad deeds in this world can come before him on the day of Resurrection in such minute detail as will make him exclaim in bewilderment: "What can this book mean? It omits nothing small or great; all are noted down!"

From the above discussion, it becomes clear how a complete account of each and every deed is being unfailingly recorded. Every thought that

comes to our mind and every single word that we utter are preserved for eternity. We are pursued by such 'cameras' as are unaffected by darkness or light and which go on documenting our lives without interruption.

What happens is very similar to the fate of erring drivers, who blatantly commit traffic offences, unaware that their every movement is being picked up by closed-circuit television cameras. One such offender was the driver of a three-wheeler scooter rickshaw who left his vehicle in a no-parking area in Delhi in the year 1980.

The system was new at that time, so he had no idea he was being watched. When he was admonished by a policeman, he tried to pretend that he had just allowed a passenger to alight and that he was about to move on. The policeman promptly took him to the traffic inspector in the control room, where he was shown a film of all his movements—his parking (no passenger to be seen!), his strolling around, chatting to friends and finally his conversation with the policeman to whom he had put on such an air of outraged innocence! Naturally, when he saw the film, he had no defence left.

Cosmic recording is similar in effect, but it is no sporadic affair. It is a round-the-clock process. And it is as if not only our external personalities, but reflections of our inner selves were being regularly pictorialized. This astonishing phenomenon is explainable only as a means of providing evidence for or against individuals, to be used in the divine court on the Day of Judgement. Now if even such a stark reality fails to convince a man of his ineluctably being called to account on that fateful day, it is impossible to imagine what would, in the last analysis, cause the scales to fall from his eyes. □



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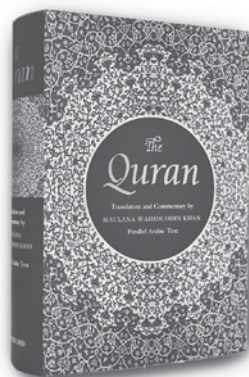
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THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures

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

Translated from Arabic and commentary by
Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



COMFORT

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

Have We not lifted up your heart, and removed your burden that weighed so heavily on your back, and have We not given you high renown? So, surely with every hardship there is ease; surely, with every hardship there is ease. So, when you are free, strive hard, and to your Lord turn [all] your attention. (94: 1-8)

The Prophet Muhammad went tirelessly in the quest of knowledge about reality and Truth. God blessed him with this knowledge, which opened his heart to the deep realization of Truth (*ma'rifah*). Then he started preaching the oneness of God in Makkah, where he had to face stiff opposition, but it was thanks to this opposition, that he became known throughout the country.

This is God's law in the present world. Hence, a man has to face difficult conditions (*usr*) in the beginning, but if he perseveres with patience, this *usr* or hardship becomes a stepping stone to new and easy circumstances (*yusr*). Therefore, a man should always look towards God and continue to struggle according to his capacity.

THE FIG

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

By the Fig and the Olive, and by Mount Sinai, and by this secure land, We have indeed created man in the best of mould, then We cast him down as the lowest of the low, except for those who believe and do good deeds—theirs shall be an unending reward! What then after this,

can make you deny the Last Judgement? Is not God the greatest of the judges? (95: 1-8)

Fig (*Tin*) and Olive (*Zaytun*) are the names of two hills in the vicinity of Jerusalem where Jesus's field of action was situated. Mount Sinai (*Tur Sinin*) refers to that hill where God made His revelation to Moses. The 'secure land' (*al-Baladu-ul-Amin*) refers to Makkah where the Prophet Muhammad was born.

God has created man with superior capabilities. These capabilities have been given to man so that he should be able to recognize the Truth conveyed to him through the prophets, and to shape his life in accordance with it. Those who do so, will reach a high position of honour, which will be theirs for all eternity. On the contrary, those who do not make their God-given capabilities subservient to God's will, will have even the existing blessings taken away and they will have no place to take refuge. Their lot will be total deprivation. The raising of prophets and the end-results of their mission, bear testimony to the veracity of this fact. □



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ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan in a Panel Discussion on Unity in Diversity, New Delhi

Do you agree with the understanding that Ultimate Reality, whatever it is called, has to be One and that it is ineffable, that it is too great to be described in words?

According to Islam, Ultimate Reality is only another name for God. The Islamic concept of God is based on *tawhid*, or the oneness of God. God is one, not only in number but in every other aspect. God alone is the Creator and Sustainer of everything.

Islam stresses duality—that there is a Creator, or God, on the one hand, and creatures, on the other. According to Islam, Reality is not only a matter of belief but also a matter of conviction. And when it is a matter of conviction, it is necessary to express that conviction in words, because human beings cannot recognize anything or establish conviction without expressing it in words. So, according to Islam, Reality or God can be expressed in words.

I don't wish to question the intent of proselytization that seeks to bring others into one's religious fold. But is it possible for followers of a tradition that believes in proselytization to truly respect religious diversity? Are they not bound to treat religious diversity as a provisional state of affairs and cherish the hope that this state of affairs will eventually be overcome when the gap between the self and the other will be bridged via religious conversion?

In the light of my study, conversion is alien to Islam. The Islamic concept is based on *Ma'rifat*, which means self-realization. According to Islam, the reality of God is a matter of self-realization.

When people use the word 'conversion', it means there are two persons—one, the person who converts from one religion to another, and the other, the person who engages in trying to make others convert from one religion to another.

This kind of concept is not present in Islam. Islam teaches that everyone must try to discover Reality on their own, because without this kind of discovery, without self-realization, there is no conviction. Conviction is very important in Islam.

Now, about the question of religious diversity, I would say that dealing with religious diversity is not a matter of religious belief. Rather, it is

a matter of social ethics. A matter of belief is a personal matter, while religious diversity is a social question. It poses the issue of how to live in a religiously diverse society, a religiously-diverse world.

It is a fact that there are differences in every aspect of life. These differences are due to the law of nature and cannot be eliminated. In such a situation, it is unrealistic during dialogue to try to establish one's superiority. The purpose of dialogue is to find out how different sections of society can co-exist peacefully. Diversity in society can never be eliminated. So, bringing an end to diversity can never be the goal of dialogue. Its goal is to search for a solution of peaceful co-existence.

Then, what is the truth? It is a subject of personal pursuit, and not of social discussion or social gatherings. Everyone wants to find out the truth in which they can believe, as human beings cannot live without conviction.

This issue, therefore, has two aspects. One aspect relates to the individual. As every individual wants to live in conviction he tries to know the truth. The other aspect is to maintain social harmony. Experience shows that social harmony can be achieved only by adopting the formula of co-existence. In this aspect there is no other option before us.

Everyone is free to adopt whatever religious beliefs they want to, but, at the same time, we all live in society, and so we must learn to live peacefully with people who may hold other religious beliefs. Believing strongly in a particular religion, being firmly convinced about it, and at the same time living peacefully with people who follow or believe in other religions are not contradictory to each other. The human mind has enormous capacities, including being able to believe in something and at the same time being committed to living at peace with people who believe or think differently.

Allow me to cite my own example. I believe in one Reality or in one religion, but, at the same time, I can say that I have love for everyone. I believe in Jesus Christ's call to love one's enemies. If you operate on my heart, you will find that there is no hate inside it for anyone, that I love every person.

While the Prophet of Islam was in Madinah, one day a funeral procession of a Jew passed by. The Prophet was seated at that time. On seeing the procession, he stood up in respect. One of his Companions said to him that the deceased was a Jew, not a Muslim. And the Prophet responded, "Was he not a human being?"

So, as this example teaches us, every human being has equal status in his or her capacity of being human. There's no difference whatsoever.

Why should the Quran be distributed to the whole of humanity?

The Quran is not a religious book in the ordinary sense of the word. When one reads it one can find out that it speaks of the law of nature and tells us about God's scheme of things. The Quran is not a book which solely commands us to pray and fast, neither is it just a book of jurisprudence. It informs us of the creation plan of God. It talks about universal laws of human nature. According to Islam the Quran is the book given to us by the Creator of the universe. It is preserved in its entirety for all time to come.

For the above reasons, the Quran is not merely the book of a certain religion. For instance, a verse in the Quran states: "Surely, with every hardship there is ease." (94: 5) This means if we face a difficulty or problem, we must not begin to fight or clash with others. The difficulty we are encountering will remain only for a temporary period. So, one must peacefully make one's plan of work rather than react or become provocative. This principle is meant for all human beings. We have an example of this principle in the histories of Germany and Japan. Germany lost one-third of its land after WWII. It then began its economic planning on the basis of the land that had remained with it and later on emerged very successful. This line of action adopted by Germany was very much an Islamic principle similar to the one stated in the above Quranic verse.

The Prophet Muhammad too in his lifetime had to let go of his hometown Makkah and had to migrate to Madinah. Though he had lost Makkah, he still had Madinah as a place to carry forward his mission. The Prophet then planned on the basis of Madinah and not of Makkah. These principles of success are mentioned in the Quran.

The universal approach of the Quran wherein the laws of nature are mentioned is the factor which justifies the work of making it accessible to entire mankind.

Can you please say a prayer to unite us all?

I'll recite a prayer of the Prophet. He used to pray thus:

Allahumma antas-salam wa minkas-salam ilayka yarjius salam hayyana rabbana bis-salam wa adkhillna daraka daras-salam tabarakta rabbana wa talaita ya dhal jalale wal ikram

It means, 'O God, You are peace, peace comes from You, peace returns to You. O God, bless us to live in peace with all. O God, grant us entry into Your Home of Peace. O God, You are great, glory be to You!' □

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