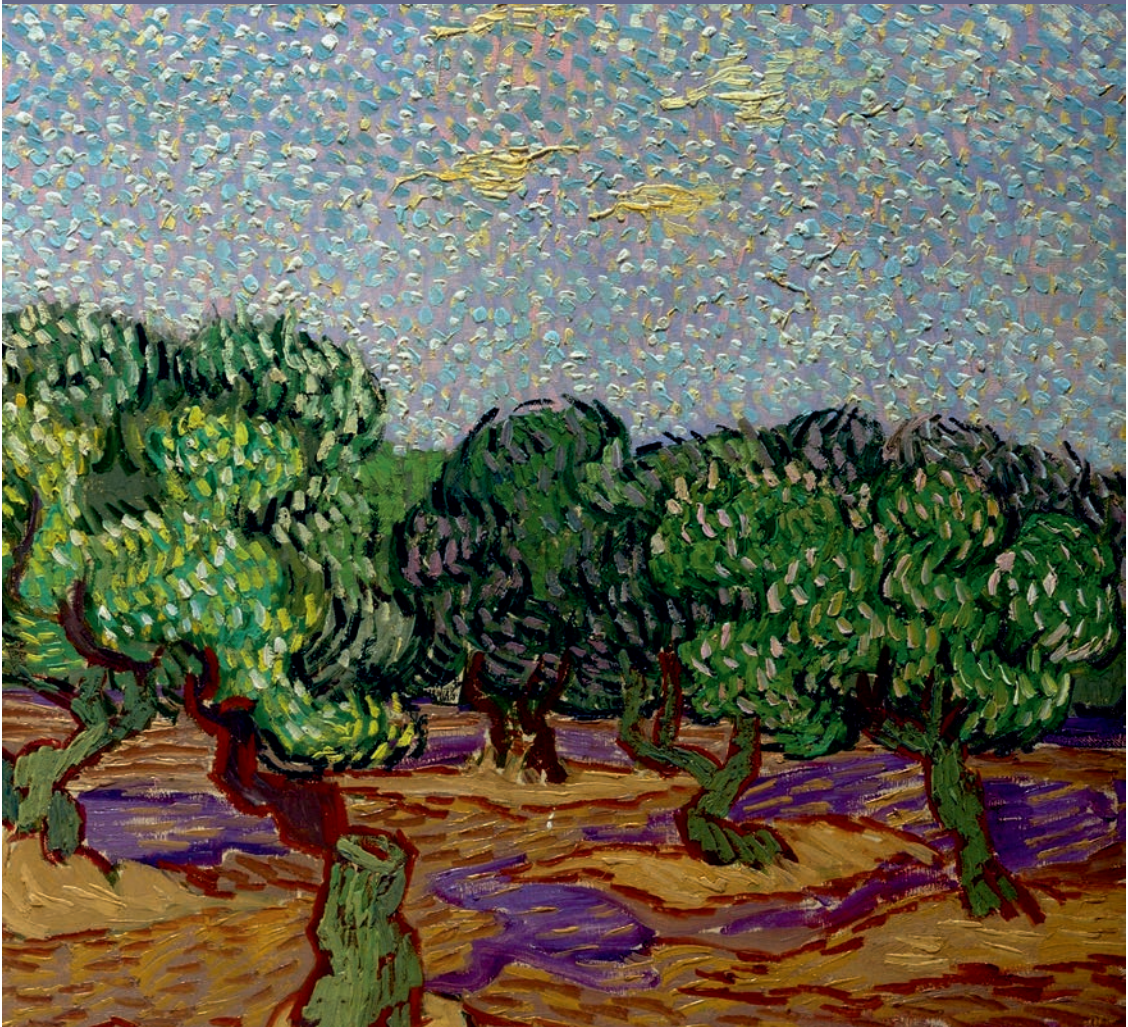


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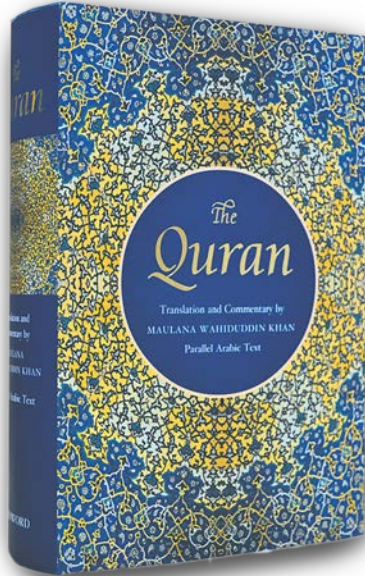


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ISSUE 18, JUNE 2014

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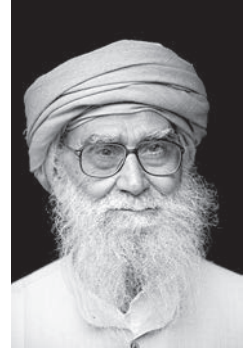
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK

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



FOLLOW REASON, MANAGE EMOTIONS

LIFE is the art of making right decisions. Successful is one who is able to take right decisions at crucial moments. Someone who is not able to do this shall ruin his life. There is certainly no alternative to right decision-making.

Sometimes, man is caught between reason and emotions. On one hand, there are emotional pressures from family, from friends etc and on the other hand there is a rational demand. In such situations, don't waste your time. Follow the practical formula: ignore the emotional pressure and respond to the rational demand positively.

Emotional pressures are always manageable but rational demands do not give man a second option. We should learn the art of managing the emotional pressure in an appropriate manner and opt for the rational demand. This is the only advisable course of action in such a situation.

Once, a woman wanted my advice on an issue she was facing. She was working in a multinational company and sometimes she used to return late from work. This job was a necessity for her. Each time this used to happen, her mother used to get angry. My advice to her was that she should maintain the job. Reason suggests that she should fulfil its demands properly so as to not lose the job. As far as her mother's

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

anger is concerned, that was an emotional problem. So, I told her that when you reach home late and your mother becomes angry, tell her politely "Oh Mother, I am hungry right now. Please give me food and we shall talk later!" She followed this formula and in this way her problem was solved comfortably.

**Emotional pressures are always manageable but
rational demands do not give man a second option.**

Life is governed by reason and not by emotions. What is reason? It is only another name for the law of nature. The laws of nature cannot be altered. It is beyond man's capacity to alter these laws. They do not give you any alternative other than following them. Emotions on the other hand, can be managed. Here the formula is: either follow the laws of nature or perish.

Man has always been amidst two factors: external factors and internal sentiments. Successful is the one who makes his plan by considering the foreign factors. Those who follow their internal sentiments are doomed to fail. Always remember that inner sentiments are manageable while rational factors have to be followed. No excuse is permissible in this regard. □

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan
editor@thespiritofislam.org



**Let not the
fire rage on**

*Rage is nothing but a
temporary provocation.*

*It is like a fire which flares up for a short duration
and then dies down on its own if it is given no further fuel.*

*If people realized this, anger would not result
in any serious disharmony.*

GOD-ORIENTED LIFE

Discover God through Creation

THE earth is the sun's satellite. It constantly orbits around the sun, taking one year to complete such a rotation. This movement of the earth around the sun is essential for the healthy functioning of life on earth. If the earth did not revolve around the sun, its existence would have no meaning, and life would come to an end.

This is a practical example of how we should lead our lives in this world. It is a physical demonstration that shows how man must indeed revolve around God, just as the earth revolves around the sun. It means that all of man's activities should be God-centric.

The earth rotates as compelled to by the laws of nature. But man, of his own free will, should surrender to God. He should build a life, which is based on the concept of God. This consciousness is the real ascension of man. In this consciousness lies the secret of all success.

The truth is that the present universe is an expression of God's attributes.

The God-oriented life begins with the discovery of God. When individuals, whether men or women, discover God, it means they have found the truth. And this truth pervades their whole being. This feeling of having discovered the truth becomes such a thrilling experience that it fills them with everlasting conviction, removing all frustrations from their lives. Therefore, losses are no longer such a problem; for, in spite of them, they never lose the feeling that their greatest asset, i.e. God, is still with them.

Man experiences this realization by pondering upon God's creations. The truth is that the universe is an expression of God's attributes. In this respect, the universe is a complete introduction to God. God is visible in His creations, just as a human being sees his own reflection in the mirror, without having any doubts about it.

The vastness of space tells man that God, its Creator, is boundless. The observation of the sun and the stars shows us that God is all light. The heights of the mountains show us the greatness of God. The waves of the sea and the flow of the river tell us that God is a storehouse

of boundless blessings. We see God's bounties in the greenery of the trees. Man's existence becomes a proof of God's existence. In the waft of air he experiences a divine touch. In the chirping of the birds, he hears God's songs.

The God-oriented life for man starts by his remembering God. He begins to feel the presence of God. Everything serves to remind him of God. God's remembrance is never absent from his heart and mind. His mornings and evenings are spent as if he is living in God's neighbourhood. Just as rain replenishes the crops, so does he remain ever immersed in the remembrance of God.

Submission to God is the only way of life for both man and the universe.

God is a spiritual focus for man. One whose heart is attached to God undergoes spiritual experiences at every moment. Belief in God becomes a source of spiritual development for him. Filled with the love of God, he does not need anything further. God becomes a vast ocean for him to continue to swim in without ever experiencing any limit. In the form of spiritual awakening, he receives such great wealth that he does not feel the need for anything else.

For one who discovers God, the entire universe becomes an open book of God. Every leaf of a tree becomes a page of the divine book.

When he sees the sun, he feels as if God is lighting His heavenly torch so that he may read His book clearly. The Universe becomes, as it were, a supernal university and he its student.

Finding God is to find his centre of Love. Man by birth is a seeker of a Supreme Being who is far above him, who is free from all limitations and who may form the centre of his feelings. In short, after finding this Being, the grown man becomes as satisfied as a child after being held in the embrace of his mother.

This discovery of God saves one from regarding something other than God as God: and mistakenly and unrealistically thinking it to be the answer to the urge inherent in his nature. The discovery of God is to fulfill his or her real urge to find God. And the failure to discover God means failure to find that which is man's greatest need.

One who fails to find God is compelled by his natural urge to give the place of God to something other than God. This place is sometimes accorded to a certain human being, sometimes to a certain animal, sometimes to a phenomenon of nature, sometimes to a certain material power, sometimes to a certain supposed concept and sometimes just to the self.

Even if one fails to discover God, or he becomes a denier of God, it is not in his or her power to stifle the urge in his nature to find God. That is why those men and women who have not found God inevitably come to hold something other than God as God. And this supposed God is always some creation or the other of God.

By nature, it is possible for man not to accept the real God as God, but it is not possible for anyone to save himself or herself from granting the status of divinity to something other than God.

Making God one's object of worship raises man's position. On the contrary, regarding something other than God as God amounts to descent from the level of humanity.

Submission to God is the only way of life for both — man and the universe. □



Habit of forgetting

The habit of forgetting is very important. It saves you from distraction, it prevents you from wasting your time, and it shields you from negative thoughts.

All these things are so important that any sacrifice to achieve it is worth it.

THE CREATION PLAN OF GOD

Discover Meaning

THE famous historian, Edward Gibbon, observed: "Human history is little more than a register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind." Other historians have also arrived at similar conclusions, for the ideal existence envisioned by philosophers is nowhere reflected in human societies. Orientalists' who have made an in-depth study of human history have remarked that, with regards to human failure to achieve the ideal society, Islamic history is no great exception.

Orientalists' hold that, although the history of the first phase of Islam — known as the golden age — no doubt presents a better picture than that of other periods, it too fails to measure up to the ideal. During the life of the Prophet, owing to the antagonistic activities of the hypocrites internally and the Jews and unbelievers externally, Madinah, the city of the Prophet, could never in any significant sense be converted into an area of peace. After the Prophet's demise, and shortly after the first Caliph, Abu Bakr, had been appointed to be the leader of the Muslims, most of the Arab tribes revolted.

**The ideal existence envisioned by philosophers
is nowhere reflected in human societies.**

Subsequently, in almost every period, unfavourable developments repeatedly proved to be hindrances to the formation of the ideal society. During the times of Umar, the second Caliph, a secret lobby in Madinah, working towards the extirpation of Islam, finally succeeded in having the Caliph assassinated. Afterwards, the age of open opposition set in. The third Caliph, likewise, was publicly murdered. The reign of Ali, the fourth Caliph, was marked by civil war in which thousands of precious lives were lost and the Caliph himself was martyred.

Given the state of affairs, thinkers and philosophers have always expressed pessimistic views about human history, holding it to be an ongoing tragedy: events have shown that, in this world, the building of the ideal human society is well-nigh impossible.

The reason for this pessimistic view of history does not lie in history itself, but in our flawed approach to the subject. Our criterion to study

history is not the correct one, for it has been formulated by human beings. The only valid criterion, in the light of which we should study human history, is that laid down by our Creator. The right way to understand this matter is, therefore, to discover the creation plan of the creator and then attempt to study history within its framework.

The only valid criterion, in the light of which we should study human history, is that laid down by our Creator — the creation plan of God.

From a study of the Quran, we learn that for a proper understanding of human society the central idea is not an ideal society, it is human freedom. Man has been granted full freedom of speech and action in this life — the reason being that he has been placed in this world by the Almighty for the purpose of being tested. As a prerequisite for this test, man is at liberty to deny God, to kill prophets and to oppose the messengers of truth. Given such a state of affairs, human freedom would have to be withdrawn altogether in order to bring an ideal society into existence. And God, in accordance with His plan of creation, would never under any circumstances abrogate human freedom.

The particular nature of human existence on earth has been thus explained in the Quran:

We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth
and the mountains, but they refused to bear it,
because they were afraid of it. But man bore
it: he surely proved unjust and ignorant.

THE QURAN 33: 72

‘Trust’ in the above verses refers to the freedom of choice with which man has been entrusted. The earth and the heavens have neither such freedom nor any will-power of their own. They are compelled to adhere to the laws of nature laid down by God for all eternity. But man has no such compulsion. He is totally free in word and deed.

From other verses in the Quran, we learn that, according to the creation plan of God, what is of actual importance in this world is the building, not of an ideal society, but of ideal individuals (67: 2). The ideal human society will, therefore, come into existence not in this world, but in the world Hereafter — referred to in the Quran as *Dar us Salam* (the Home of Peace). The actual obstacle to the building of the ideal society

in this world is the presence everywhere of rebellious and insolent people. In the heavenly society of the Hereafter, all such evil-doers will be separated from good people; the heavenly society will then be comprised only of virtuous souls. Only in heaven then will it be possible to create an ideal society.

The error in the thinking of secular philosophers derives from their desire to construct in this present world the ideal society — the society which, according to God's scheme of things, is going to become a reality only in the world of the Hereafter. The most formidable obstacle to the emergence of an ideal society is human freedom, but thanks to the exigencies of God's trial of humanity, human freedom is not going to be taken away. The ideal society will thus remain a distant dream.

According to the Quran, the truth has been fully set forth in this world. Now it is up to man to put his faith in it or to deny it (18: 29). At another point the Quran says:

The straight way leads to God and there are ways which
deviate from the right course. If He so wished,
He would guide you all.

THE QURAN 16: 9

The Quran further observes:

If your Lord had wished, He would have made mankind
into one community. As it is, they will not cease to
dispute, and to this end He has created them (all),
except for those to whom your Lord has
shown mercy. The word of your
Lord shall be fulfilled.

THE QURAN 11: 118-119

This freedom granted to man by his Creator is the reason why a society with uniformity in all its aspects could never be produced in human history. If in a society there are virtuous people, there are wicked people as well. The unworthy have never ceased to create disturbance; even the societies founded by the prophets are no exception. This is why despite the existence of good individuals in this world, a good society could never become a possibility. However, this is not a matter of evil, or even of deficiency. The truth is that the recurrence of disturbance and dissension in society is essential to the realization of the Creation Plan itself, for good people

of the highest calibre are produced in unfavourable rather than in favourable situations.

We learn from the Quran that man was born into an existence fraught with toil and strife (90: 4). The Quran, addressing the human race, has this to say: 'Go down from here as enemies to each other. For a while, there is an abode for you and a provision on earth.' (7: 24). In this world, man has no choice but to lead a life which is marred by trial and tribulation, opposition and enmity till the coming of judgement day.

According to the Creation plan of God, what is of actual importance in this world is the building — not of an ideal society — but of ideal individuals.

This human condition has not come about by accident. This is exactly in accordance with the divine scheme of things. God has created this world in order to select those individuals who are capable of inhabiting heaven. These worthy inhabitants of Paradise are invariably produced under abnormal rather than normal circumstances. Human beings, therefore, will continue to face unfavourable circumstances in order that desirable people will go on being produced for such a selection.

The Quran states:

Do people think that once they say: 'We believe', they will be left alone and not be put to the test? We certainly tried those who have gone before them, so God will certainly distinguish between those who are truthful and those who are lying.

THE QURAN 29: 2-3

In a similar vein the Quran says:

Do you think that you will enter Paradise without having suffered like those who passed away before you? Affliction and hardship befell them and so shaken were they that the Messenger and the believers with him would exclaim, when will God's help come? Surely the help of God is near.

THE QURAN 2: 214

There is another verse to this effect: Do you suppose that you would enter the Garden, without God knowing those among you who would strive hard for His cause and endure with fortitude? (3: 142). Yet again the Quran addresses Muslims in these words: Do you [O believers] think that you will be spared without God identifying which of you have struggled and did not take any one for friends and protectors except God, His messenger and the believers? God is fully aware of all your actions. (9:16)

The truth is that in this world what is desirable to God is not the Ideal Society but the Ideal man. And as we learn from the Quran, such an individual is produced in conditions of 'severe affliction' (33: 11), and not in normal, peaceful circumstances.

The truth is that the recurrence of disturbance and dissension in society is essential to the realization of the Creation Plan itself, for good people of the highest calibre are produced in unfavourable rather than in favourable situations.

God looks with favour upon those human beings who, finding themselves in the midst of a jungle of theories and ideologies, are able to discern the truth and then to persevere in their adherence to it. He gives His approval to those human beings whose faith remains unshaken even in the face of severe problems and dire adversity; whose hearts, even when they are subjected to all manner of persecution, are untainted by negative sentiments; who when threatened with calamity, do not lose heart, but undergo a process of brainstorming which will lead to their intellectual development; who even when faced with such untoward events which are likely to divert them from the Straight Path, remain staunch in their faith in God; who feel the great tumult of the awakening of spirituality in their hearts, bringing them closer to God.

The man most desirable to God is one worthy of inhabiting the refined and ideal world of Paradise. Such a person, the rarest of rare phenomena, is greater than all that is great in the Universe. Such a human being takes a new birth. He is born, not in peaceful circumstances but in great strife and turmoil. He faces darkness in this world, so that he may live in the eternal light of the Hereafter. He treads a thorny path in this life, so that he may enjoy a flower-filled environment in the afterlife. Here he suffers loss, so that he may be blessed with the joys

of recovery in the Hereafter. He patiently bears the deprivation of the pleasures and comforts of this world, so that he may be entitled to a place in the eternal Paradise of heavenly bliss.

Such a precious soul cannot come into being in a vacuum. Nor can he develop in the normal atmosphere of society — no matter how closely-approaching the ideal that society may be. It is only in the jungle of adversity that such a soul can emerge; there is no other possible breeding ground.

God has created this world in order to select those individuals who are capable of inhabiting heaven.

What philosophers describe as social evil is a training ground devised by the Creator to produce human beings of great moral and spiritual character. That is why, in every period of human history, mankind has been faced with all manner of conflict and dissension. The true believers; the virtuous and, in particular, the prophets, have invariably found themselves in unpropitious situations. There is a *Hadith* to this effect: "When God loves a people, He puts them to the test."

Unfavourable circumstances are not peculiar to non-Muslim societies; in one way or another, they have always been a part of Muslim societies too. In ancient times, the prophets whenever sent to any nation were subjected to severe persecution by unbelievers and deniers. We learn from the Quran that the Prophet Moses was likewise threatened with mental torture and physical agony, even though he had been sent to the People of the Book, that is, to the Jews (33: 69).

The Prophet Muhammad, may peace be upon him, established a properly organized state in Arabia, later known as the *Khilafat-e-Rashida*, and ruled successively by the four rightly guided Caliphs. But even during this ideal period of Islam, the state continued to suffer from a variety of severe problems. Indeed, there is no period of the Islamic State which can be pinpointed as one in which Muslims led their lives in a state of perfect peace and normalcy.

This is not due to any deficiency in the Islamic State, but rather due to the exigencies of the 'training course' established by God Himself for the moral discipline of human beings. As mentioned above, it is not part of God's plan that an ideal society should be formed in this world

in which people will lead peaceful lives. According to God's scheme of things, what is of actual importance is the preparation and formation of individuals. This unavoidably takes place in an atmosphere, not of peace and tranquillity, but of turbulence and turmoil.

In the present world, at neither the national nor communal level, do we possess the moral and physical resources which are essential to the construction of a high standard society. However, we do have the means to build the ideal character in individuals, and this is an ongoing reality — as a requirement of God's Creation plan, which is concerned not with the building of a heavenly society, but the building of the heavenly individual who is fit to dwell in the ideal society of paradise.

Looked at in terms of the ideal society, the history of Islam would appear to have its darker, negative side. But if seen in terms of the development of individuals, this same history would appear to have a very positive, bright side. The ideal society or the ideal state may not have come into being but, throughout Islamic history, there has never been any dearth of individuals of great moral and spiritual calibre. Indeed, the annals of history may have little to show in terms of ideal societies, but their pages have been made resplendent with the thoughts, words and deeds of ideal individuals. □



Super achievement

Unpleasant experiences are painful but they make a necessary contribution to advanced intellectual development.

Without undergoing this kind of experience, no one can be a super achiever.

MESSAGE OF RAMAZAN

Emotions of Faith

According to a *Hadith*, the Prophet of Islam said:

God suggested to me, 'We will change one of the valleys of Makkah into gold for you'. I said, 'Oh my Lord, No! Instead, I desire that one day I should eat well and be satisfied and remain hungry the next day. So that when I feel hungry, I can beseech You and remember You and when I am full and satiated, I can praise You and thank You.'

IT is a fact that emotions and feelings of faith are directly related to the situation or circumstance. Every situation in life presents an occasion for emotions of faith. As there are many different situations that can arise, accordingly there are many different types of feelings and emotions of faith. Man has been placed in this world for the purpose of a 'test'. That is why for every man and woman in this world many different circumstances arise in their lives, so that it can be assessed which one of them will satisfy the requirements of the test.

In this world situations and conditions of comfort or want are both extraneous. What is of importance is the reaction to the situation and not the situation in itself. Given the situation, was the reaction desirable? If this fact is clear to any man or woman then they will not look at the situation of comfort or want but at the reaction they present as testimony. Was it gratitude or pride; acknowledgement or thanklessness; one of patience or one of intolerance? Such people will evaluate and introspect at every situation and not complain about the circumstances. Without such conditions there can be no emotion at all.

God desires two qualities from His believers. First, that they acknowledge the all pervading power of God and express their utmost helplessness to Him. Secondly, that after receiving and perceiving of the blessings of God they express their gratitude for the same. Both these desirable qualities have been clearly and explicitly explained in the Quran and the *Hadith*. The most practical experience of these qualities is one that appears in the form of hunger and thirst on the one hand and satiation and contentment on the other. The pangs of hunger and thirst are the ultimate experience of the realization of man's weakness, helplessness and dependence. In a similar manner when he

partakes of food and water after going through hunger and thirst, that is the utmost experience or realization of the value of the food and water that God has provided for him.

In this world man needs to experience both the feelings of hunger and satiation. He should experience the feeling of a parched throat and the pleasure of drinking cool water to quench his thirst; a feeling of contentment described in a *Hadith* as 'My thirst was quenched and my nerves were cooled'. Feelings will not arise without the associated conditions. Fasting in the month of *Ramazan* is an annual program for creating such conditions. Through fasting one experiences both hunger and satiation so that one can be humble as well as grateful to God.

While giving the command for fasting the Quran says:

Believers', fasting has been prescribed for you, just as it was
prescribed for those before you, so that you may
guard yourselves against evil.

THE QURAN 2: 183

The month of *Ramazan* is the month when the Quran was sent down as guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and the criterion by which to distinguish right from wrong.

He desires you to fast the whole month, so that you may
glorify Him for His having guided you and so
that you may be grateful to Him.

THE QURAN 2: 185

Two essential benefits of fasting are mentioned in these verses. One, that fasting creates piety in an individual. Secondly, fasting makes it possible for man to express genuine gratitude to God. The same feelings that the Quran mentions as piety and gratitude are mentioned in the *Hadith* as humility and thankfulness. These two feelings are essential to worship. Acknowledgement of God's power and acceptance of our helplessness creates the feelings of piety and humble supplication. And, the acknowledgement of God's blessings creates the feelings of praise and gratitude towards God.

If man is conscious of these facts he will experience both these types of feelings every day and in every situation. From every incident he will derive this divine nourishment for his soul. Fasting has been ordained so that these feelings can generally be further developed with more intensity. In other words, fasting in the month of *Ramazan* is a general training to be accomplished through a specific course. □

REPUTATION WILL PAY, NOT HONOUR

Develop Reputation

An American author, Lois McMaster Bujold (b. 1949), has said:

“Reputation is what other people know about you.
Honour is what you know about yourself.”

REPUTATION is the opinion that others hold about you. How is this opinion formed? It is developed through your deeds, and not through your words. Reputation represents your real personality; while, honour is your own perception about yourself. It is like self-praise, that is, believing that you are 'so and so', without taking into account of what others think about you.

**Reputation is the opinion that others hold about you;
while, honour is your own perception about yourself.**

Your reputation is like a cheque that can be cashed from the bank. The market knows you through your reputation, and not through your self-perception. You cannot 'cash in' your self-perception or honour in the market. If you want to have a place for yourself in the market, then you have to create a reputation for yourself by your actual deeds. Honour or self-praise cannot give you any place in the market.

Some people live in self-pride. They are always engaged in praising themselves. But, self-praise can only satisfy oneself, the other person will never take heed to your self-praise.

Everyone is born with some special quality. If you discover that quality and utilize it, that will inculcate gratefulness for God. However, if you yearn to develop a quality that you do not possess, then that will lead to following of an unrealistic approach. As a result, you will always give others a reason for complaint ❑



SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

Protection of mankind

According to the Quran *Surah Al-Maida* Verse 32:

Whoever killed a human being except as a punishment for murder or for spreading corruption in the land shall be regarded as having killed all mankind, and that whoever saved a human life shall be regarded as having saved all mankind.

THE QURAN 5: 32

WHEN a person commits such a crime as is mentioned in this verse, in reality he breaks the inviolable ethic of the sanctity of human life. The sanctity of human life is a kind of value system that is a barrier to anyone taking another's life. In any society, when this value system and sanctity is violated, then this barrier is demolished. A person who commits such a crime gives licence to others in society to indulge in similar or lesser such crimes. The murder of one human being opens the door to the killing of mankind.

The sanctity of human life is a kind of value system that is a barrier to anyone taking another's life.

Adam's two sons Habil and Qabil had a conflict on some issue that escalated further until Qabil murdered Habil. In this way Qabil became the first person in history to breach the ethic of the sanctity of human life. He was the first to use the method of violence in order to resolve conflict and hence began a new convention. In reality therefore, Qabil's actions was not just the killing of his brother, but it was the beginning in history of a new convention of killing another human. After this murder, this wrong convention has continued relentlessly throughout human history.

To better comprehend this issue consider the example of the medieval Muslim state known as Al-Andalus or Muslim Spain (711-1492 AD). The Muslim rulers of Spain in the later periods had become weak due to their internecine differences and conflicts. Initially the kingdom was fragmented into a number of smaller states and fiefdoms and then gradually, one by one, these small states started to disintegrate and

their rulers were deposed. Eventually the only Muslim territory that was left was the Sultanate of Granada under the Nasrid dynasty established in 1238 AD, by Sultan Mohammed I ibn Nasr who was better known as Mohammed ibn al-Ahmar. This was the name given to him as he was the one who built the famous Alhambra palace of Granada.

Muhammed II al-Faqih was the son and heir of Mohammed ibn al-Ahmar and the second Nasrid ruler of the Granada Sultanate. In 1302 AD, his son Mohammed III had him poisoned and ascended the Sultan's throne. This murder broke the tradition of sanctity of life in the royal palace. Following this there was a series of murders in the royal family.

The safety of mankind lies in upholding the ethic of the sanctity of human life.

In 1310 AD, Sultan Mohammad III was blinded and killed on the command of his brother Abul Juyush Nasr so that there would be no other heirs to the Sultanate. Abul Juyush Nasr then reigned as Nasr, Sultan of Granada until 1314 AD, when he was overthrown by his nephew Ismail I. Sultan Ismail I himself was assassinated by his cousin Muhammed in 1325 AD. Sultan Muhammed IV then took the throne but like his father Ismail I, he was also assassinated by his relatives in 1333 AD. The throne fell into the hands of Sultan Yusuf I.

In 1354 AD, whilst praying he was killed by a dagger. His son Muhammed V succeeded him but was overthrown by his half-brother Ismail II in 1359 AD. Less than a year later Sultan Ismail II and his brother were murdered by the sultan's brother-in-law Abu Said who ruled as Muhammed VI. Similarly, one after another the Sultans and princes were murdered until the end of the Granada sultanate in 1492 AD.

The safety of mankind lies in upholding the ethic of the sanctity of human life; and the breaking of this ethic is the destruction of mankind. □



ULEMA AND THE MODERN AGE

Misguided Politics

WITH the dawn of the modern age the western colonial powers had spread all over the world. Their primary focus was not the establishment of political power in the world; it was their discoveries in science and technology, of new lands and opportunities. This was also the case of the companions of the Prophet who took the divine message to different parts of the world. It is altogether another matter that both — western colonial powers and the companions of the Prophet — also won political power. The western powers were in fact the ambassadors of the scientific revolution and had discovered a world completely different from the traditional order.

With these discoveries they had spread out to the far corners of the world, but the Muslims and their *ulema* considered these western powers their political rivals and stood against them in confrontation.

The western powers were ambassadors of the scientific revolution.

The unnecessary political and violent efforts of the *ulema* failed to defeat the Western colonial powers. What happened, instead, was this: internecine fighting among the Western countries themselves, culminating in the Second World War, drained their military strength to such an extent that it became exceedingly difficult for them to continue to exercise political control over other countries. That is why they granted political independence to these countries in the mid-20th century, although their cultural and economic control over them remained intact.

As a result of this development, some 50 Muslim-majority politically independent states emerged in Asia and Africa. At this time, too, it was the task of the *ulema* in these countries to shoulder the very same responsibility that Islam had given them — that is to say, to leave politics to the politicians and to focus their energies, instead, on the spread of knowledge, communication of the divine message, as well as social work and other such constructive activities. But, instead of doing this, they again rushed headlong into the field of politics in a completely unwarranted way.

Before this, in the period of European colonial rule, the aim of the politics of these *ulema* had been 'the struggle for independence'. Now their politics was conducted in the name of 'the enforcement of Islamic law'. In numerous countries, including Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Algeria, Indonesia and so on, the *ulema* set up parties whose aim was to establish political rule according to Islamic law. This politics once again turned Muslim countries into battlefields, the only difference now being that while earlier, in the colonial period, the *ulema* had been pitted against non-Muslim peoples, now they were up in arms against a section of fellow Muslims themselves. And so, these 'Islamic' parties found themselves playing the role of the Opposition in almost every Muslim country.

These efforts of the *ulema* did not result in the establishment of purely *Shariah*-based rule in any Muslim country. But what did result from all of this was that Muslims everywhere became divided into, broadly, two mutually-opposed camps that were at war with each other. If, in the colonial period, non-Muslim forces killed Muslims, now Muslims began slaughtering their co-religionists. And, consequently, everywhere Muslim societies fell prey to destructive activities.

The primary focus of the western colonial powers was not the establishment of political power in the world; it was their discoveries in science and technology, of new lands and opportunities.

Had the *ulema* of the Muslim countries stayed aloof from practical politics, and focused instead, on the reform of Muslims, awakening the spirit of Islam among them, producing Islamic literature according to modern standards that would promote a thirst for Islam among Muslims and similar sort of work, they would have been better able to work towards establishing an Islamic government. If they had played their role in transforming Muslim societies into truly Islamic societies, the system of governance that would have naturally emerged from this process would undoubtedly have been an Islamic one, as is suggested by a *Hadith*:

Your leadership will be a reflection of you [the people].

The real cause for the failure of efforts to enforce Islamic law in Muslim countries is not the oppression of secularist rulers or the conspiracies of the enemies of Islam, unlike what many of those who regard

themselves as 'lovers of Islam' repeatedly claim. The real reason for this is the blunder committed by the so-called flag-bearers of Islam who, without properly preparing Muslim societies for this sort of governance, went about stirring up campaigns for the enforcement of Islamic law. The Pakistani example very well exemplifies this point. In that country, what are called 'pro-Islamic' forces have, on more than one occasion, won the chance of ruling the country, either partially (as in the case of Mufti Muhammad Mahmud's winning control of the Frontier Province in the 1970s) or completely (as in the case of the rule of General Zia ul-Haq). Yet, in no way have they succeeded in enforcing the *Shariah* there.

A narrative of Aisha, the Prophet's wife, provides a very appropriate commentary on this matter. It is a long narrative, in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and a portion of it reads as follows: The verses of the Quran which were revealed in the beginning contained details about Paradise and hell. Subsequently, when the people embraced Islam the verses regarding legal and illegal acts were revealed; which, had they been revealed earlier, would not prevent people from pursuing the illegal, as they would not yet be aware of Eternal reward and punishment.

In Muslim lands, the *ulema* involved in movements for the enforcement of Islamic law simply assumed that because the majority of the inhabitants of these countries were Muslims, they were, by definition, in favour of Islamic law. This was a complete misreading of reality, however. The fact is that the present-day generation of Muslims is actually a communal aggregate, and not, in the real sense, a truly religious collective. Hence, it is wrong to assume, even about people who pray and fast and perform *Haj* or *Umrah*, that they want that political power should be wielded by the *ulema*, who should impose *Shariah* laws on them.

The unrealistic politics of the *ulema* in Muslim countries have produced a situation which we can properly appreciate in the light of the *Hadith* referred to above. Without preparing the populace to welcome and accept Islamic laws, the *ulema* seek to impose these laws, including with regard to the consumption of liquor and adultery, while at the same time, large sections of the populace react to them, saying, "We will never let these laws of yours be imposed on us."

In January 1827, Sayyed Ahmad Bareilvi and his companions had established what they termed as an Islamic government in the Peshawar

region, near the Afghan border. Sayyed Ahmad Shahid was selected as the head of the state, the *Amir ul-mumineen* (leader of the believers). But, very soon, internecine rivalry broke out, so much so that local Muslims set about slaughtering the representatives that Sayyed Ahmad Barelvi had appointed in their areas. And so, this 'Islamic government' collapsed almost as soon as it had been established.

This failed experiment in seeking to establish Islamic rule without preparing Muslim society adequately for it was not, however, accepted as a warning sign by later generations. That is why efforts continue to be made even in our day to repeat this experiment which, some 250 years ago, very clearly showed how impossible it was for it to succeed.

By the middle of the 20th century, movements aiming for what they called 'Islamic Revolution' emerged almost all across the Muslim world. These were led by *ulema* as well as 'pro-Islamic' intellectuals. But these people, both when they were in the Opposition as well as when, in some cases, they came to power, simply became a cause for giving Islam a bad name. It is a fact that these movements in the name of 'Divine Government' (*Hukumat-e Ilahiya*), the 'Islamic System' (*Islami Nizam*) and the 'Enforcement of the *Shariah*' (*nifaz-e shariah*) proved only to be counter-productive.

**It was the task of the ulema in these countries
to shoulder the very same responsibility
that Islam had given them.**

It is worth noting in this regard that numerous great non-Muslim thinkers, from the late 19th till the mid-20th century, had declared Islam as the solution to the problems besetting humanity in the present age. But, at the end of the 20th century, no important non-Muslim thinker made any such announcement.

The cause for this was the wrong representation of Islam by the so-called revolutionary Muslim leaders. Prior to this, the intellectuals of the world were presented with the history of the early phase of Islam, and, impressed by it; many of them had a very positive image of Islam. But the meaningless movements stirred up in the name of Islam by the present-day *ulema* and other Muslim leaders turned into nothing but yet another cause for adding to human misery. Faced with the record of these so-called representatives of Islam in our times, many people

have become disgusted with Islam itself. And so, no longer do many globally-influential intellectuals believe that Islam can be a means for human welfare in the present age.

The Example of the Prophet

Abdullah Ibn Abbas, a companion of the Prophet reports an incident from the early Makkan phase of the Prophet's time. One day, the leaders of the Quraysh gathered near the Kabah. They decided to send one of their men to the Prophet to call him so that they could talk over matters with him. When he received this message, the Prophet went to meet them.

When the discussion started, the representative of the Quraysh told the Prophet that he had become a source of trouble for their tribe, and accused him of abusing their forefathers, criticizing their religion, and insulting their Gods. After going on in this vein, he told the Prophet that he should desist from what he was doing, in return for which the Quraysh were ready to give him whatever he wanted. The Quraysh would even concede to making him their ruler if he wanted that.

The Prophet did not accept this offer of the Quraysh, and, instead, continued with his missionary efforts. Later, when he shifted to Madinah, he established an Islamic government there. Now, the question arises as to why the Prophet did not accept the offer of heading the government earlier, in Makkah, which the Quraysh had made to him, while he established an Islamic government 15 years later, in Madinah. Why didn't he establish this Islamic government in Makkah, fifteen years earlier?

The reason for this is that the way to establish an Islamic government is not that any 'Islamic personality', using any means whatsoever, comes to occupy the seat of governance. The establishment of a regime is very closely linked to the prevailing external conditions. The establishment of an Islamic government requires a suitable society, whose members have become receptive to Islam, and where the political factors necessary for the stability of the administration are present.

In the Makkan period of the Prophet, these favourable factors had not crystallized. That is why the Prophet did not try to establish Islamic government in Makkah. But, later, in Madinah, these factors had crystallized, and that is why the Prophet established the rule of Islam there.

The difference in the two contexts is clearly apparent from the fact that in Makkah it was possible for the wife of Abu Lahab to condemn the Prophet and to even publicly sing verses criticizing him and announcing that she refused to accept the message he was propagating. On the other hand, in the 13th year of his prophethood, when the Prophet, along with his companion Abu Bakr, arrived in Madinah, he was greeted by the children of the town singing verses that celebrated his arrival and his message.

A similar example can be drawn from the life of the Prophet Moses. The Children of Israel, the people of Moses, the Quran tells us, had been destined to acquire political power once again. And so, after the demise of Moses, the Children of Israel rose up in revolt against the then ruler and established their own government over Syria and Palestine.

Here, it is interesting to note that the Children of Israel had the same opportunity of establishing a government half a century earlier, at the time of Moses. Why, one might ask, did they have to wait for so many years till they finally did so?

At the time of Moses, the Pharaoh of Egypt and his entire army were drowned in the sea, and this cleared the field for Moses. Moses could have returned to the then Egyptian capital, Memphis, along with the Children of Israel, and occupied the vacant Egyptian throne. After the miraculous destruction of the Pharaoh and his army, the denizens of Egypt must have been so awe-struck that they would have readily accepted Moses as their new ruler.

But Moses did not do this. Instead, he left the vacant political field of Egypt and, along with his people, went into the Sinai desert. There, the Children of Israel faced forty years of harsh life, where a new generation was born, that was reared in the desert and survived.

Now, the only reason for this delay was that the generation of the Children of Israel that had earlier lived in Egypt had, for certain particular reasons, fallen prey to moral decline, so much so, as the Quran (5: 25) relates, Moses told God that besides himself and his brother Aaron (Harun), he had no faith in any person. And so, all the people of Children of Israel were kept in the wilderness so that a new generation of the Children of Israel, reared in the desert, should develop a reliable character and then become capable of establishing an Islamic government.

These two instances very clearly prove that a new regime can only be established when the necessary collective conditions favourable for it prevail. The example of the Prophet tells us that if among the public a conducive environment does not prevail in the real sense, even a prophet cannot establish a government in such a context. And if he does establish a government despite the absence of such a conducive environment, it will soon collapse, and the end result of this will be fruitlessness.

Keeping this Prophetic example in mind, it will be clear that the agitations that swept all across the Muslim world, driven by the slogan “Establish Islamic Government”, were simply foolish. Their logical result could only be — and it turned out to be precisely so — terrible destruction, with their goal remaining as distant as before. □



Nation Building

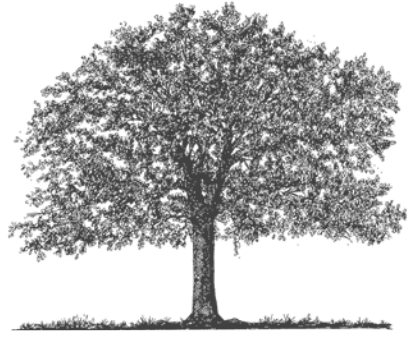
*No nation can
ever hold up its head,
far less take pride of place
amongst the nations of the world, if
the individuals of which it is comprised
think of nothing but personal gain
and self-glorification.*

Believer's world view

*For a believer, if everything goes according to
plan, a feeling of thanksgiving is aroused in him.
But should his plans go awry, he realizes that
man can only propose; it is God who disposes.
In this way he comes closer to the Lord.*

FROM THE SPIRITUAL TREE

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



THE DIVINE WAY

THERE are countless stars and asteroids in the universe. All of these are incessantly rotating in the vastness of space. Space is like a limitless runway for the movement of these countless orbiting bodies at great speed. But what is most amazing is that neither the planets nor the stars ever collide in their course.

What is the secret? The secret lies in their rotation within their own orbits with the utmost precision and without the slightest deviation. It is this law of motion which has prevented the heavenly bodies from colliding.

Exactly the same course is desirable for human beings. For the human course too God has set a fixed sphere within the limits of which every human being has to move. If everyone moves in his respective sphere, a state of peace is automatically established in society. But when people cross their limits, and break the barriers set for them, society will witness clashes and confrontations.

Those who deliberately or even unthinkingly collide with other people will not only invite their own destruction but will also destroy others.

How must man live in social life? How should he deal with others? What should be his behaviour? What norms should he follow in his sayings and deeds? For all this, God has given clear commands. He has explained what man should do and what he should not do. In life's daily affairs opting for the course permitted by God is like the stars moving in the orbits fixed for them.

On the other hand, indulgence in forbidden things is like deviation from the fixed sphere. It is people who deviate in this way who cause all kinds of evil and corruption, and who, in their straying, destroy not only themselves but also the society in which they live.

The true believer is one who leads his life in the sphere appointed for him by God. It is those who unswervingly pursue the course set for them by their Creator, will share God's blessings in this world as well as His eternal blessings in the Hereafter. □



Tolerance

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

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RESULT-ORIENTED ACTION

Practical Wisdom

BERTRAND Russell (1872–1970) was a British philosopher; at the same time he was a peace activist. At the end of the WWI, he had been imprisoned for six months for participating in anti-war protest. This would not be his last time in prison for his pacifist stances. In 1961, three years after founding the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, he was in jail for one week in connection with anti-nuclear protests.

This street demonstration by Russell created media furore. He and the protestors were able to supply temporary news for the media, but in terms of the required result, it was totally a non-event. Russell and his colleagues were successful in registering protest, but they were unsuccessful in changing the course of events. There have been countless similar protests and demonstrations throughout the world which have proved largely ineffective.

Peace requires intellectual change.

The issue of peace is not a matter of street demonstration. Peace requires change in people's thinking. Without intellectual change, it is impossible to bring about change in the real situation.

There is a dictum adopted by UNESCO: 'Violence begins from the mind.' The same is true for the issue of peace. Peace begins from the mind. Anyone who wants to establish peace must adopt the right beginning. The right beginning for this purpose is the human mind, and not the streets.

Then, the object of peace cannot be attained through any kind of short-term planning. It requires long-term planning. Anyone who wants to see a peaceful world must adopt long-term planning. Long-term planning requires patience, and it is a fact that any substantial achievement can be had only through patient planning and not simply through emotional outbursts. □



THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE STATE

Example of the Prophet

According to a *Hadith*, the Prophet told his Companions to offer their prayers in the manner in which they saw him praying.

Perform your prayer the way I perform it;
O people learn from me the rituals of Haj.

THIS is what he said with regard to *salah* or prayer. But, he did not say the same sort of thing with regard to governance. He did not tell his Companions, 'See my model of governance, and you, too, should establish governance in the same way.' The Prophet of Islam did not issue the same sort of instruction for governance that he used with regard to prayer.

If you ponder over this difference, you will realise that the question of individuals is distinct from that of the state. As far as individual conduct is concerned, we have in front of us an ideal model — the model of the Prophet of Islam. Every believer must be an idealist in matters related to his individual conduct. He must always strive to mould his life in line with the model of the Prophet.

But the question of the political setup is entirely different from this. In the matter of the political or governmental setup, the prevailing status quo with regard to the collective conditions should be kept in mind and the political setup should be shaped accordingly. This is why there is no single model for the appointment of a Caliph in Islam. Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali and Umar ibn Abdul Aziz are regarded by Muslims as five 'rightly guided' Caliphs, but, as is well known, the method of appointment of all five of them was different from each other.

In later times, after the Prophet, Muslim jurists or *fuqaha* formulated a political model by the name of *Dar ul-Islam* (The Abode of Islam). This was a derived concept, which was not proper. These jurists exercised their own reasoning in this matter. Consequently, people took *Dar ul-Islam* to be the criterion and began using it to judge the governments of their times. And when they found that political systems were not in accordance with this criterion, they began fighting against established governments. Such wars were without any doubt against Islam; because in Islam, the political setup is to be determined in accordance with prevailing conditions, and not in accordance with any ideal model that has been formulated beforehand. □

FASTING AS A SPIRITUAL CULTURE

Simple Living—High thinking

ACCORDING to Islamic teachings, *Ramazan* — the ninth month of the *Hijri* (Islamic) calendar — is the month of fasting. In this month believers refrain from food and drink for a limited period each day, that is, from dawn till sunset. They eat and drink during the night. This practice continues for one month.

What is fasting? Fasting does not simply amount to observing hunger for a temporary period of time. In fact, it symbolizes a lifelong culture, that is, a culture of dedication.

According to Islamic ideology, a believer is a man of mission. A man of mission is a different person. He has little time for anything other than his mission. He eschews all such activities as are irrelevant to his mission and fasting symbolizes this spirit.

A person, who controls his material life and devotes himself for a higher cause, also inculcates spirituality in himself.

The Arabic equivalent of fasting is *sawm*, which means abstinence. Abstinence is the gist of fasting. When one involves himself in a mission, that is, of spreading the word of God, he has no time, except for fulfilling his bare necessities. This is the mission culture.

Abstaining from food and water for a limited period is symbolic training. This practice prepares one to lead a life of dedication to one's mission.

Fasting during the month of *Ramazan* reminds a faithful person that if the acts of abstinence were to reach the extent of refraining from food and water for a temporary period, then he would be ready to do so for a higher purpose. Although this training is for a temporary period, it enables ones to lead one's whole life in accordance with this spirit.

For a faithful person, living for the divine cause is his mission. All other things become secondary for him. This kind of focused life is also a great source of spirituality. A person, who controls his material life and

devotes himself for a higher cause, also inculcates in himself what is called spirituality. In terms of external form, he refrains himself from material things, but in terms of inner content, he inculcates spirituality in his personality. Fasting makes one a spiritual person.

Simple living refrains one from distraction, and high thinking is only the other name for a distraction-free life.

Fasting is not a set of rituals. It is rather the adoption of the well-known formula — simple living, high thinking. Fasting helps one adopt this formula. Simple living refrains one from distraction, and high thinking is only another name for a distraction-free life. And, when one saves oneself from distraction, the result undoubtedly is high thinking. □



Simple Ethics

Everyone likes to be addressed with good manners and pleasing words. So everyone should speak gently to others. Everyone wants his existence to be problem-free, so he should avoid creating problems for others.

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EMBELLISHMENT OF DEEDS

Powerful tool of Satan

SATAN is man's enemy but Satan has no power to indulge in any aggressive or physical action against man. There is only one thing in Satan's power and that is to put evil suggestions into man's mind or instigate him towards evil thoughts. That is to say, Satan's activities against man are always at an intellectual level rather than at a physical level, and man must therefore guard himself from Satan's deception.

How does Satan lead man into evil? He does it by allurement (THE QURAN 15: 39). That is, by beautifying evil actions. What is the method of this satanic beautification? It is to present a baseless argument as a strong argument in favour of an action.

Satan's activities against man are always at an intellectual level rather than at a physical level.

According to the Quran, Satan had said to God at the time of Adam's creation that he (Satan) would deceive the whole human race; that he would influence their minds through such beautification or decoration and would make people see false arguments as valid arguments.

This act of intellectual deviations on the part of Satan can be seen throughout human history. We can find such examples in family life, in society as well as at the global level. A large number of men and women are involved in evil; in their thoughts and deeds, and they find beautiful words to justify such actions.

They describe their negative actions in positive terms. They find constructive words for their destructive activities. They give beneficial and constructive titles to their anti-social activities. This is called embellishment and man is able to beautify his evil actions through satanic assistance having befriended Satan, their enemy. □



THE CONCEPT OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Perfect society / Perfect Justice

GOD is indispensable to man. His life is incomplete without God. A philosopher has aptly remarked that had there been no God, we would have had to invent one. Fortunately, God exists in reality. We can believe in God with conviction, not as a supposition, but as a fact. And we can accord Him the place He deserves in our lives.

It is essential that man should have within his reach, a super formula for life's management. God provides just such a formula — a complete principle for life's management.

Human beings are not like machines controlled by a mechanical system, nor are they like animals who are governed by their instincts. Human beings enjoy freedom. They take decisions about their actions of their own free will. Now the question arises as to how to keep man on the right course, how to make him consistently disciplined in his behaviour. History shows the ineffectiveness of all worldly measures in this connection, whether — social pressures, enforcement of the law of the land or the appeals of reformers.

History shows the ineffectiveness of all worldly measures to keep man on the right course and to make him consistently disciplined in his behaviour.

Experience shows that the pressure of society is limited, if not totally ineffective. There are so many loopholes in the law that it is not difficult for wrongdoers to find a way out. The reformers' bid to reform people are nothing but appeals; and appeals alone cannot bring about a revolution in human life.

The truth is that for the attainment of disciplined behaviour, it is essential for one to be convinced of the existence of a power far superior to himself, a Being who is aware of man's activities at every moment; who can reward and punish man, and from whom it is impossible to escape.

There can be only one being of this nature — and that is God. Belief in God functions at two levels at the same time. On the one hand, man

finds in God a guardian who is aware of all his activities and who has unlimited power to chastise him. It is not possible for man to escape God's chastisement. Belief in God compels man to steadfastly adopt an appropriate attitude in all situations, privately as well as publicly. Only then can he save himself from the wrath of God.

On the other hand belief in God is a storehouse of limitless hope. Man can lead his life in this world with the conviction that if he incurs any loss because of treading the path of truth, or if he suffers from any other adversity, he will be able to endure it manfully. For if he adheres to the path of truth, God will grant him a reward in the form of eternal paradise, and there can be no reward greater than this.

For the attainment of disciplined behaviour, it is essential for one to be convinced of the existence of a power far superior to himself.

It is not possible for man, on his own to bind himself to moral values or adhere to justice. This is possible only when he is convinced of the fact that he is under a super power — a super power who observes justice to the extent of perfection; for whom it is fully possible to guide man to the true path and also to punish those who deviate from this norm.

This present, limited world is totally inadequate for punishing a criminal. Similarly, this world is also inadequate for granting great rewards for one's good deeds. The concept of God tells us that God can create a far better world free from all the limitations of the present world, where reward and punishment both can be satisfactorily awarded.

The concept of a living and powerful God is necessarily accompanied by the concept of accountability. And the concept of accountability guarantees right thinking and right actions on the part of man. It makes man cautious by reminding him of God's chastisement. Moreover, this gives him the conviction of receiving God's reward if he adheres to the right path at all costs and in all situations.

The concept of God provides man with an ideology in which loss is turned to gain and in which adversity brings with it good tidings. □

SECOND EXPULSION

From Earth

BY the end of the 20th century industrial progress was seen as an entirely positive development. But in the 21st century it was found that there was a very damaging aspect of industrial progress — that of carbon emissions.

Industrial progress has brought in its wake industrial pollution, which has resulted in global warming; that is, weather chaos, melting of storehouses of water, the death of fragile animals, the pollution of sea water — in short, the disequilibrium of the life support system itself.

Industrial progress has brought in its wake industrial pollution, which has resulted in global warming.

Maintenance of an extravagant lifestyle is the actual reason for global warming. The present resources of the world permit only using them in accordance with real needs, but man wants to use them to lead a luxurious life. It is this unrealistic goal of man which has produced the grave problem of global warming in modern times.

Global warming is like a proclamation by nature that this target of man is never going to be fulfilled in this present world. This target is at variance with nature and as such, cannot reach the stage of completion in this world.

This is no simple matter, for it is directly linked with the creation plan of God, which has to be properly understood, failing which this matter cannot be rightly analysed. Here man's plan is clashing with the plan of the Creator of nature, and that is what makes it impossible to successfully implement.

We can understand the above point with the help of the following narrative. God created Adam (the first man) and Eve (the first woman) and settled them in Paradise. God said to Adam:

O Adam! Live with your wife in Paradise and eat freely from it anywhere you may wish. Yet do not approach this tree lest you become wrongdoers.

THE QURAN 2:35

This meant that if they did so, they would be expelled from Paradise. But Adam and Eve chose not to follow God's guidance. They ate the fruit of the forbidden tree and, as a result, they had to leave Paradise and come to the present earth.

When God settled man in this present world, He again set limits for him, which confined him to taking sustenance from this world solely in terms of need, not greed.

This was indeed a case of overstepping the boundary and resulted in the first expulsion. Today such transgressions are taking place on a far larger scale. When God settled man in this present world, He again set limits for him, which confined him to taking sustenance from this world solely in terms of need, not greed. Moreover, he was not to try to lead a luxurious life.

Prior to the stage of modern industrial progress, man had no option but to observe these limits, but subsequently, with industrial progress, he chose to ignore them, running after a life of comfort and luxury, which culminated in the late 20th century and early twenty-first century.

Now the Creator's verdict against man has been passed. The shield of the life-support system is being taken away from him. A life of luxury was, for man, like the forbidden tree of Paradise. But man, because of his boundless desires, went beyond all limits.

Now the time has come very close when man will be expelled from this present world, just as Adam was expelled from Heaven. Another name for this second expulsion is *Qayamat*, or Doomsday. □



On Fasting

The aim of fasting is to weaken the material aspect of man and strengthen the spirituality in him.

PARADISE AND MAN

World as a Selecting Ground

PROFESSOR Nau Nihal Singh after his retirement from an American University, came to India where he was elected to the Rajya Sabha from 1992 to 1998. He was a true scholar. He had done his masters in political science and had completed his doctorate on international relations.

The story of how he got into the American university is very interesting. While he was in India he came across an advertisement by an American University for the post of professor in his subject. Prof. Singh applied for it and was almost immediately called for an interview. When he reached USA, he was received by a representative of the university appointed to serve as his guide. Prof. Singh was taken to the university, and accommodated in the university guest house. This guide visited Prof. Singh daily and showed him around the vast university campus from morning till evening. In this way, he took him to different departments of the university and acquainted him with all the main areas of activities of the institution; for instance, the library, the dining hall, the classrooms, the teachers' club, students' meetings, university workers' meetings, etc.

Paradise is the world of reward whereas the present world is a testing ground.

Almost a week passed in this way. Prof. Singh started to feel anxious. He spoke to the chairman of his department, "I was called for an interview and have been here for a whole week, but so far no interview has taken place." The chairman replied, "Your interview has already taken place and you have been selected. You can join as soon as possible."

The chairman then went on to explain to Prof. Singh that the person whom he had met at the airport, and who had acted as his guide, was none other than a senior professor and also his interviewer. He added that they had learnt of his educational qualifications from the testimonials he had sent them and now they wanted only to know whether or not he measured up to the culture of the university. This had been the task of his interviewer, who had taken him to the different departments of the university and introduced him to all the activities going on there. The students and teachers had been observant of

his behaviour during their meetings. The interviewer too was doing likewise. The report of the interviewer was wholly positive as were the reports of other teachers, students and workers whom he had met during his week-long stay there. Therefore, on the basis of these reports they had selected him.

This incident parallels the situation of Paradise and man. God created a Paradise, a vast world which is perfect in the fullest sense of the word. Everything in Paradise is of the highest possible standards. Therefore, God wants such people to inhabit this world who are flawless in character and thus fully qualify to live in this ideal environment.

In order to select the qualified people for Paradise, God created the present planet earth as a model of that world. Here everything exists that is available in the world of Paradise, the only difference being that Paradise is perfect whereas the present world is imperfect. Paradise is an ideal world whereas the present world is far from being ideal. Paradise is an eternal world whereas the present world is ephemeral. Paradise is free from all kinds of fear and sorrow, whereas the present world is beset by these very ills. Paradise is the world of reward whereas the present world is a testing ground.

Man will live with complete freedom in the world of Paradise but he will be so mature and conscientious that under no circumstances will he misuse his freedom.

According to this plan, God created man and settled him in the present world, on the planet earth. God gave man the opportunity to stay here without applying any curbs on his freedom. Man has the right either to use his freedom in a rightful manner, or to misuse it as he pleases. Every man who is born into this world has two invisible angels of God with him at all times. They are constantly preparing records of man's words and deeds. It is on the basis of this record that he will be awarded Paradise or hell in the next world.

Man will live with complete freedom in the world of Paradise; but he will be so mature and conscientious that under no circumstances will he misuse his freedom. He will lead a life of complete discipline in spite of enjoying total freedom. This is the man for whose selection this planet earth was created. All the circumstances that are present in the world of Paradise are also present in this world. Now what is being observed is the man who, while experiencing all kinds of situations, both good

and bad, has proved to possess a character worthy of Paradise. He is the one who will be selected and accommodated in the eternal world of Paradise.

God's invisible angels are ever present with man and they are preparing the records of his deeds at every moment. This is the test of man and it is on the basis of this test that the future of every human being will be decided. The test is of man's acknowledgement of the greatness of God on every occasion, which is whether he pays attention to the voice of his conscience or ignores it. When he is confronted with logical argument, does he surrender to the truth or go against it? when there is a choice between ego and truth, does he accept the truth or become an egoist?

God gave man the opportunity to stay here without applying any curbs on his freedom.

Similarly, while dealing with people does he adhere to justice or does he become unjust in his own interests? Is he a good person in private just as he appears to be in public? Does he make truth his supreme concern or does he make anything else his supreme concern?

In the same way when he gets a position of power does he become corrupt or does he adhere to justice? When he receives wealth or when he experiences poverty, does he prove himself to be on the path of moderation or does he deviate from it? In social life, when he is given a front seat, how does he behave and given a back seat, how does he react? Does he subjugate his desires and emotions to principles or does he do the opposite? The decision about the eternal future of every man and woman will be based on this very record.

The present world has been created for a limited period of time. After the completion of this period, all human beings born in this world will be presented before God. According to records prepared by the angels, God will decide the future of each and every one. Those men and women whose records show that they lived in the world with nobility of character, and used their freedom according to God's will, thus proving that they were fit to be lodged in the environs of Paradise will be selected to inhabit the Gardens of Paradise. And all those who fail to demonstrate nobility of character will be rejected and sent to the universal dustbin to spend a life of frustration and regret, and will never escape from this condition. □

THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures

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

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

Enthroned above the waters, it was He who created the heavens and the earth in six Days [periods], in order to test which of you is best in conduct. If you say, 'You will [all] be raised up after death,' those who deny the truth will say, 'This is just sheer sorcery!' If We defer their punishment till an appointed time, they ask, 'What is holding it back?' On the Day when it overtakes them, there will be nothing to avert it from them; and what they used to mock at shall encompass them. (11: 7-8)

The present world was created by God in six days; that is, in six stages or six periods. There was a period when its surface was covered with water. In this part of God's domain, only water was seen everywhere at that time. Then, at God's behest, patches of land emerged and water filled the great hollows which became the seas and the oceans. In this way it was possible for various species of life to come into existence on the earth.

God has the power to give an ideal shape to things and events, but He has chosen to fashion this world in a less than ideal way, so that it may serve as a testing ground for man. Indeed, God's purpose in creating the world and settling human beings upon it was to single out the doers of good deeds. 'Good deed' is actually another name for a realistic deed, i.e. one which a man is required to perform in accordance with reality, without there being any pressure upon him. A realistic person is one who appreciates the hidden hand of God by peering through the cause-and-effect veil which, by design, He has drawn over His creations; he is one who, in spite of apparently having power, renders himself powerless; one who, in spite of having the option of leading an arrogant life, becomes obedient to God.

In the present world, the selection of such realistic persons continues unremittingly. When the period of this selection is over, the present system will be replaced by another standard system in which all good things will be allotted only to those who perform good deeds, leaving all bad things for the wrongdoers.

Almighty God does not immediately catch hold of those who deny the truth and the arrogant in view of His rule of giving respite; that is, He gives them respite to the fullest possible extent, so that they may be warned and reform themselves, or finally prove themselves guilty. This rule of respite becomes a cause of misunderstanding to certain arrogant people. They forget their real position of powerlessness and start indulging in tall talk. But, when they are smitten by God's scourge, they will, there and then, come to know how helpless they are, in comparison to God.

When We bestow upon man a measure of Our grace and then take it away from him, he yields to despair and becomes ungrateful. And if, after adversity, We let him taste good fortune he says, 'All my ills are gone.' He becomes exultant and boastful. Not so those who are patient and do good deeds. They shall have forgiveness and a great reward. (11: 9-11)

In the present world, man is given ease and hardship by turns. But here, neither is comfort given as a reward nor is hardship imposed as a punishment. The purpose of both is to put human beings to the test. This world is a great examination hall. The purpose of whatever happens to man here is to see what sort of responses he offers to different testing conditions.

That man is a failure whose behaviour is such that when he receives some worldly bounties from God, he becomes proud; he behaves with haughtiness towards those who appear to him of a lower status than himself. Similarly, that person is also a failure who displays ingratitude when some bounty is taken away from him or he becomes the victim of some affliction. Even after being deprived of something, a man still possesses many things granted to him by God. But man forgets these and becomes so desperate over that one loss; he feels as if he has been robbed of everything.

On the contrary, those who fully measure up to the standards of Faith are individuals who are patient and righteous in their deeds. That is, in spite of every setback, they keep their emotional balance and continue

to exercise moderation; they continue to do whatever they are required to do as subjects of God.

What is patience? It is a man's conduct being shaped by principles and not by the conditions and situations in which he finds himself. Whatever be the condition, he should rise above it and formulate his views purely in the light of Truth. He should have the courage to live out his faith and moral awareness, unaffected by the prevailing conditions. This sort of life is one of piety. Those who establish their piety in this way will be the ones who will share God's bounties in the life of the future and rightfully earn a place in God's eternal Gardens. □



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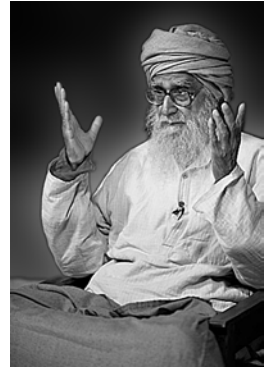
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ASK MAULANA

Your Questions, Answered

Men apparently use logic to understand everything in life but are unable to use the same logic for the existence of God and life hereafter? Why is this so?

The British philosopher Bertrand Russell has rightly pointed out that knowledge is of two kinds: knowledge of things and knowledge of truth. In the area of “things”, empirical argument is workable. While, in the area of “truth”, only inferential argument is applicable. Scientifically, both these arguments are valid. People do not know the difference between these two subjects. They try to apply the logic that pertains to the first category to the second category. This wrong application leads to confusion.



Why is man so easily attracted to evil by justifying the same?

Evil is a phenomenon of uncontrolled behaviour. A person who knows that uncontrolled life leads to disaster will try to control his behaviour and save himself from indulging in evil. Man is a justification-seeking animal. This is interwoven in his nature, so he always tries to justify his actions in terms of reason, whether they are good or evil.

How does the jealous psychology of a person adversely affect the well-being of another person?

Jealousy always affects the jealous person himself. As a matter of fact, the other person is bound to not be affected, provided he is able to restrain himself from reacting negatively.

People often say that we are spiritual but not religious; some even consider themselves to be 'spiritual atheists'. What is your view about such statements?

A spiritual atheist is spiritual only in the partial sense. Because, spirituality needs a basis, and in atheism or the philosophy of atheism there is no basis for spirituality. Spiritual atheism is like a rootless tree. Religion gives us a basis for spirituality. For example, life is full of disadvantages. When an atheist faces these disadvantages, he may fall prey to frustration. However, a believer will not become frustrated,

because his belief in God provides him unlimited conviction and trust, which an atheist does not possess.

Is being emotional or sensitive a sign of weak personality?

Emotions or sentiments are part of nature. These feelings themselves do not indicate that the person possesses a weak personality. A weak personality is that which succumbs to its emotions or desires. A strong personality is a non-yielding personality, while a weak personality is a yielding personality.

When someone takes his own life, is it due to God's decision? Or, is it the shortening of the test, which is a decision of man?

Taking away one's own life is not the decision of providence. Rather, it is the misuse of freedom. Everyone has total freedom in this world. A person is free to either misuse his freedom or make proper use of it.

It is not wise to judge two parties by listening to only one party, yet people make this mistake everyday. Why is it so?

This kind of judgement is completely wrong. No one has the right to issue judgements without taking into account the stand of both the parties. There is always an inherent bias in reporting, while ignoring concerns of the other party. Without listening to both the parties, it is not possible to make a right decision. Therefore, it is totally wrong to pass a judgement by listening to only one party. The reason why people pass judgments without taking into consideration both parties is because they don't have the sense of responsibility due to their insincere nature.

How can you maintain peace when somebody is indirectly trying to harm your image or assassinate your character?

It is very easy to do so, because, when a person tries to distort your image, he is not inflicting any kind of physical harm on you. The best formula in this regard is that if it is physical harm, try to find a remedy for it. However, if the harm is non-physical in nature, then one should simply avoid even thinking about it. A problem is a problem if it is material or physical in nature. One must learn to differentiate between the two. □



Glossary

Abu Bakr Siddiq died 632 AD; a close companion of the Prophet; also the first Muslim Caliph.

Abu Lahab Paternal uncle of Prophet Muhammad.

Adam First man and first prophet.

Aisha (612–678); daughter of Abu Bakr, wife of Prophet Muhammad; one of the most intellectual and influential women in Islamic history.

Ali bin Abi Talib died 661; cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad; the 4th Muslim Caliph.

Al Maidah Name of the 5th chapter of the Quran meaning of the word *Maidah* — the table spread.

Amirul Mumineen Leader of the Believers.

Dar ul Islam land or state under Islamic governance.

Dar us Salaam Home of Peace'; referred to as Paradise.

fuqaha Islamic jurists.

Habil the second son of Adam; was murdered by his elder brother Qabil (Cain).

Hadith sayings and deeds of the Prophet of Islam.

Haj Pilgrimage

Harun also known as Aaron, brother of Prophet Moses.

Hukumat-e-Ilahiya Divine Government.

Islami Nizam Islamic System.

Jinn a living creation of God made from fire; *Jinns* have free-will just like mankind.

Kabah the sacred house of God built originally by prophets Abraham and Ismael in Makkah (present day Mecca).

Khilafat-e-Rashida also Rashidun Caliphate or 'Rightly Guided' caliphs (632–661 AD) is the collective term comprising the first four caliphs in Islamic history (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali); founded after Prophet Muhammad's death in 632.

Madinah Medina; also called Yathrib during the time of Prophet Muhammad.

Makkah Mecca

Nifaz-e-Shariah Enforcement of the *Shariah*.

Orientalist scholar of Oriental studies; of near and far Eastern (Asian and Middle Eastern) societies and history.

Qabil also Cain; the first born son of Adam.

Qayamat Doomsday

Quraysh the dominant tribe of Makkah during the time when Prophet Muhammad was born; genealogical ancestry traced to prophets Abraham and Ismael.

Ramazam Ninth month of the Lunar calendar; month of fasting.

Salah also *Salat*; the Islamic prayer.

sawm Fasting

Shariah moral code and religious law of Islam.

Surah chapter of the Quran.

Ulema also *ulama*; religious scholars.

Umar also Umar Faruq or Omar bin al Khattab, died 644 AD; a close companion of the Prophet; the 2nd Muslim Caliph.

Umar bin Abdul Aziz died 720 AD; Umayyad Caliph; great grandson of Umar ibn Al Khattab.

Umrah minor pilgrimage to the *Kabah* (house of God).

Uthman also Usman or Uthman ibn Affan; died 656 AD; a close companion of prophet Muhammad; also the 3rd Muslim Caliph.

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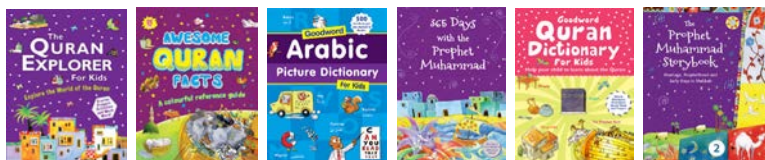


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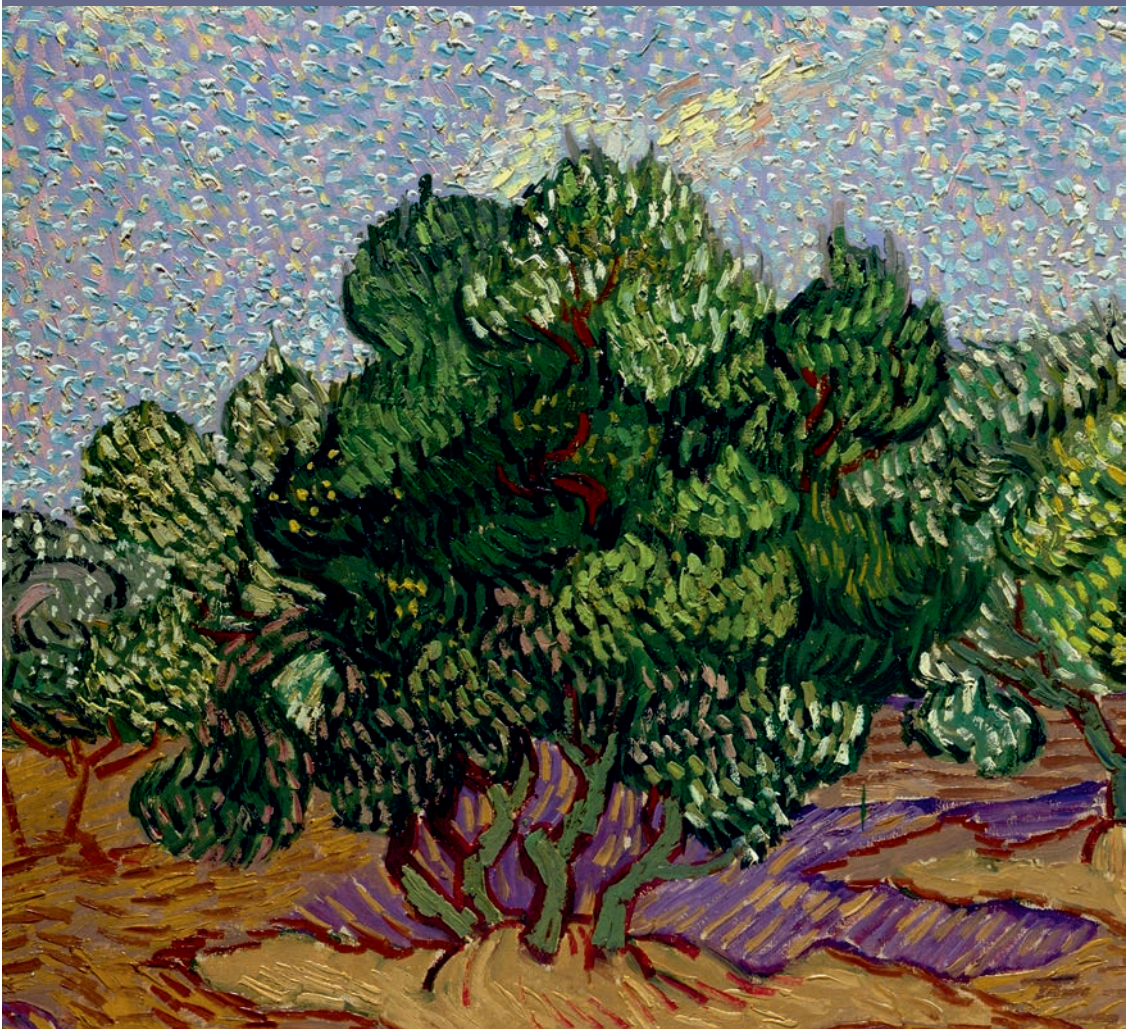


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