

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



Love humanity as you love your parents.

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

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

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

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

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

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



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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

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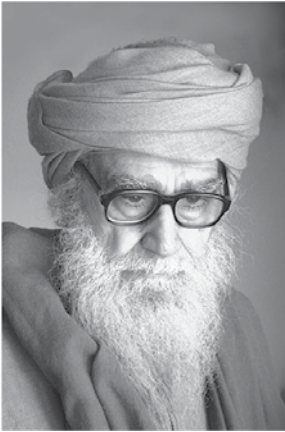
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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

THE AIM OF ISLAM

THERE are some who claim that religion is an individual matter, and others who take the opposite view, zealously putting forward their claim that religion is a complete social order. Outwardly both views appear to be opposed to one another, but they do have one thing in common: both present religion as a system related to individual life, and the second as a system related to society as a whole.

In its true essence, however, religion is neither an individual nor a social system; it is a divine path. The aim of the religion of Islam is to discover our Creator. Religion is to believe in what is unseen as if it were before one's eyes; it is for thoughts of God and the life after death to dominate one's mind—so much that one is always thinking about them and setting the course of one's life in accordance with their demands.

The aim of the religion of Islam is to discover our Creator.

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

The true purpose of Islam is to bring what the Quran calls 'devoted servants of God' (*Rabbaniyun*) into existence. Islam seeks to imbue every single individual with love and fear of the Lord. The type of person that Islam seeks to form is one who fears God above all else, whose focus of attention is the next eternal world; one who subordinates all his actions and dealings to the will of God; who does not follow the dictates of the devil and his own desires but submits to one God alone.

The true purpose of Islam is to bring what the Quran calls 'devoted servants of God' (Rabbaniyun) into existence. Islam seeks to imbue every single individual with love and fear of the Lord.

Islamic faith is essentially a discovery—the discovery of God. Islam is for one to see beyond the superficial forms of things to the reality that lies beneath; it is for one to set one's gaze beyond creation and fix it on the Creator. This is to see something that others have not seen, to discover something that others have yet to discover. When true Islam

enters a person's soul it is the most shattering of experiences. It brings one face to face with a reality which changes the very nature of one's life. It is rebirth, the making of a new man.

Islam addresses itself to the individual, not to society as a whole, for only an individual can experience the psychological upheavals that Islam brings about. To seek to Islamize society, without individuals having undergone the inward transformation essential to Islam, does not serve to strengthen and consolidate God's religion; it can only undermine it. □

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

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Peace

Peace is a prerequisite for all kinds of human progress. With peace, we progress without peace, we face ruin.

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 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 has designed a series of courses on peace-building, countering extremism and conflict resolution.

WOMANHOOD IN ISLAM

O MANKIND, fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul. He created its mate from it and from the two of them spread countless men and women (throughout the earth). Fear God in whose name you appeal to one another, and be mindful of your obligations in respect of ties of kinship. God is always watching over you. (4:1)

Fear of God and honouring of one's fellow men—this is the twin foundation of Islam laid down in the Quran in the above verse. According to most of the commentators who have penetrated deep into the meaning of the Quran 'it' in the above verse refers to 'species'. That is Eve was created not from Adam himself—but from the same species as Adam.

In several other verses from the Quran the word 'soul' has been used to mean 'species'—for example 'God has created for you spouses of your own kind". (16:72)

Another of His signs is that He created for you from among yourselves spouses, so that you might find repose in them, and He created between you affection and kindness.

Thus women and men are from the same species. Biologically speaking, women have not been extracted from the bodies of their

male counterparts. God fashioned them according to His Will, just as He fashioned men in accordance with His Will and Power.

Modern research has presented the facts on a purely academic level, that fundamental, inborn differences do exist between men and women. A detailed article on the Status of Women in Encyclopaedia Britannica includes a section on Scientific Studies of Male-Female differences. Here the author points out physical differences in the respective constitutions of male and female forms of the human species. "With respect to personality traits", he writes, "men are characterized by greater aggressiveness, dominance, achievement and motivation, women by greater dependency, a stronger social orientation and the tendency to be more easily discouraged by failure than men. (Encyclopaedia Britannica vol.19 p.907).

The tenets of Islam are based wholly on nature. This is because Islam is the religion of nature. The laws Islam requires us to follow are, in fact, our own instinctive human requirements expressed in legal terms.

And there are a number of latter-day scientific experiments to back this up. Child specialists say that male-female differences are entirely genetic in nature. The passivity found in women is due to the particular nature of the female hormone. Differences between male and female hormones exist from birth; they are not acquired later, as would be the case if they stemmed from differences in environment.

The tenets of Islam are based wholly on nature. This is because Islam is the religion of nature. The laws Islam requires us to follow are, in fact, our own instinctive human requirements expressed in legal terms. And the teachings

of Islam with respect to women are no exception. They too are based on nature. Modern psychological, biological and anatomical research proves women to be more passive than men. This is the way their Maker has fashioned them. The nature of their womanhood and the special part they have to play in society, demand that they should be just as they have been made—that is relatively delicate as compared to men.

It is this fact of nature on which Islamic teachings have been based. Because of women's delicate constitution, Islam teaches men to be gentle with them. That way they will not lose heart or become too despondent to perform their special duties in life. Women are not like

iron and steel, immune to rough treatment. They are like ribs; fragile and delicate. It is best to let them be, in their natural state. If one treats them as though they were tough metal, one will only break them.

Thus, when God says that He created man's mate from the same soul He means simply that women are of the same species as men. God created them that way so that there should be harmony between the two sexes. If men and women had been derived from different species—then the two would have been unable to get on together. Family life would have lacked peace and harmony; men and women would have been unable to struggle hand in hand to build a better world.

As far as the saying of the Prophet likening women to a rib, it is a parable illustrating the need to treat women gently on the basis of their particular natural constitution. The Prophet of Islam delivered this advice time and again, in various ways and it is something that he himself practised throughout his life.

During the time of the Prophet, women used to attend the night prayer. Sometimes they used to take their small children along with them. The Prophet used to pay special attention to strict and full observance of prayer. Yet so great was his consideration for women that sometimes, when he heard babies crying, he would cut short the prayer. He said that "Sometimes I stand up for prayer, with my intentions being to do a long one. Then I hear a baby cry, so I cut short the prayer, not wanting to make things difficult for the child's mother. (Bukhari) □

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Dawn Follows the Night

*After the night comes the dawn,
so that in its light individuals may
continue their journey without
a break.*

JESUS IN THE ISLAMIC SCRIPTURE

The Messiah

A MAJOR portion of the Quran is dedicated to the exemplary lives of the prophets. Jesus—one such prophet—is frequently mentioned in the Quran as “The Messiah,” “A Mercy,” “Prophet,” “Messenger,” “Word from God,” “Spirit,” “A Sign,” “One brought near (to God),” “Upright,” “Servant,” “Eminent,” “Blessed,” “A Witness,” and “A Parable.”

As such, he is honoured everywhere by Muslims. The Prophet Muhammad during his Night Journey to Heaven, saw Jesus and described him as “a man of medium height, red complexion, curly hair and broad chest.” Mary, the mother of Jesus, described in Quran as “one exalted above all womankind,” has a whole chapter of the Quran (number 19) named after her, which tells of the miraculous birth of Jesus. The story begins with an angel announcing the birth of a holy son to Mary, who, being a chaste woman, was quite distraught at this news. But the angel reassured her that this was the will of God, that it was not a difficult thing for Him and that it was a sign and a blessing to all humankind.

When Mary gave birth to Jesus and brought him to her people, they all pointed their fingers at her. But she was told by God to remain silent and to point to the baby. As the people were wondering how they could talk to a child in the cradle, the baby Jesus performed his first miracle by saying these fine words: “I am God’s servant. He has given me the Book and made me a prophet; He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined upon me prayer and almsgiving throughout my life. He has made me dutiful toward my mother, and He has not made me arrogant or wicked. Blessed was I on the day I was born, and blessed I shall be on the day I die and the day I am raised to life again.”

(19: 30-33)

When Jesus attained manhood, God bestowed upon him “scriptures and wisdom, along with the Torah and the Gospel.” He was also given the power to perform a number of miracles, such as fashioning a living bird out of clay; giving sight to the blind; healing a leper and raising the dead to life; he also had the wisdom to inform people what they ate and stored up in their houses.

The Quran also mentions the day when his disciples demanded that he bring down from the sky a table spread with good things. Jesus prayed

for this, but warned them of God's wrath, if they disbelieved in Him afterwards, His prayer was then answered and his disciples happily had their feast.

Yet, despite these clear signs, the Israelites rejected him, accusing him of sorcery. They made clear their outright disbelief in him when he said to them, "I am sent to you by God, confirming the Torah that came before me and bringing good news of a messenger to follow me, whose name will be Ahmad." (61: 6) (Ahmad is another name of the Prophet Muhammad, meaning "The Praised One"). They even tried to kill Jesus, but God saved him at the last minute by raising him up to the sky: "They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but it only seemed to them [as if it had been so]." (4: 157)

The Quran further clarifies that his creation was no different from that of the first human being: "Jesus in the sight of God is like Adam. He created him from dust, then said to him, 'Be!' and he was." (3: 59)

Jesus taught no false worship, but only preached the unity of his Creator. On the Day of Judgement, God will question him: "Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to people, 'Take me and my mother as two deities besides God?'"

Jesus will disclaim this, saying: "Glory be to You! How could I ever say that to which I have no right?" (5: 116) And he will add: "I told them only what You commanded me to, 'Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.'" (5: 117)

The Quran mentions: "Of the People of the Book there are some who stand by their covenant; they recite the word of God during the night and prostrate themselves before Him, who believe in God and the Last Day, who enjoin justice and forbid evil and vie with each other in good works. These are righteous men." (3: 113-14) The Quran welcomes them to a common faith, saying: "People of the Book, let us come to a word common to us that we shall worship none but God and that we shall associate no partner with Him and that none of us shall take others, besides God, for lords." (3: 64) □

Mary, the mother of Jesus, described in Quran as "one exalted above all womankind," has a whole chapter of the Quran (number 19) named after her, which tells of the miraculous birth of Jesus.



FOR THE GOOD OF HUMANKIND

Courageous Souls

IT was the fourth of November, 1847. The servant entered the room of his master, a Scottish doctor, to find him lying face-down on the floor alongside two of his colleagues. They appeared to have rolled down from their chairs. The servant thought that perhaps they had drunk too heavily, so he covered them up and quietly went away. But the facts were quite different. For the men lying unconscious on the floor were Sir James Simpson (1811-1870) and his two assistants who had inhaled chloroform for the first time ever in order to experience its effects on the human body.

Simpson was the youngest son of a poor baker. At the age of four, he began his education at a village school. As time went on he became

The secret of the western nations' leadership of the world can be explained by the existence of such people who have the courage to risk their own lives so that others may be saved from risk—who have the courage in other words to sacrifice themselves for humanity.

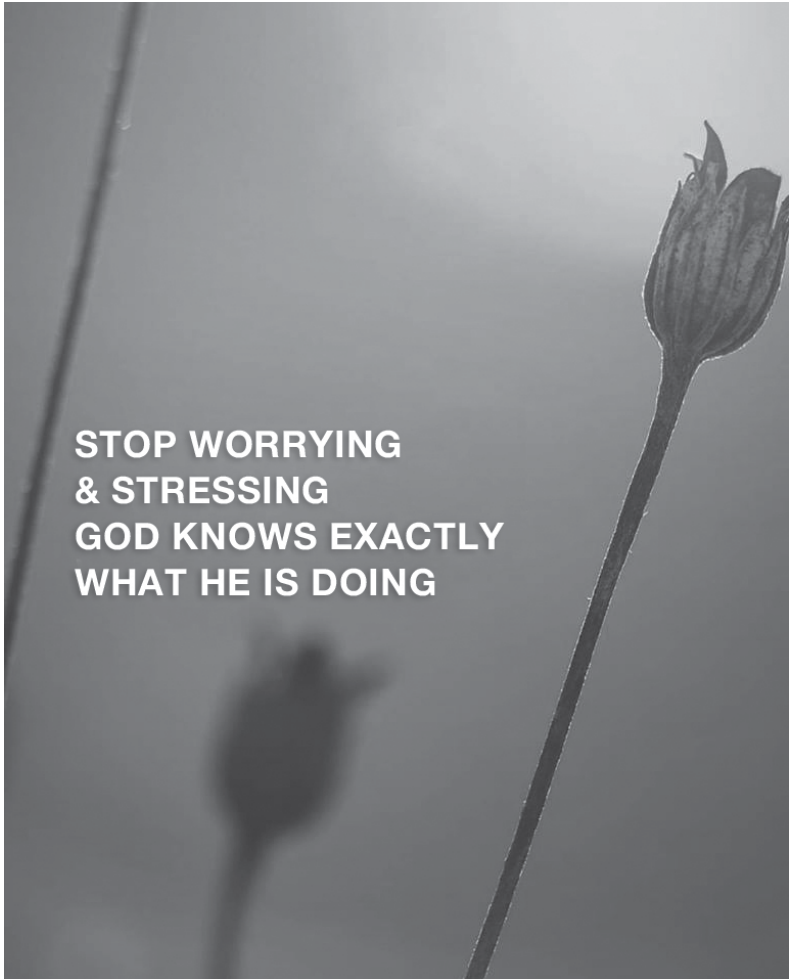
so greatly interested in his studies that his father and six brothers agreed that the sacrifices must be made for him, so they cut down on their expenses and sent the boy to the city for higher education. So he came to Edinburgh University, where he acquired an M.D. Degree, the highest degree in medicine in those days, thus making himself worthy of his family's tremendous sacrifices.

During his studies, Dr.Simpson had learnt that chloroform possessed certain properties which temporarily benumbed the senses, so he began to conduct research into it, finally coming to the conclusion that if the patients were rendered unconscious by means of chloroform they could be relieved of severe pain during the course of operation. He continued his research and, by experimenting upon himself, he proved that chloroform

could successfully induce harmless anaesthesia. This son of a poor baker was thus able to give to humanity, in the words of Dr.Brown, "one of God's best gifts to His suffering children".

The secret of the western nations' leadership of the world can be explained by the existence of such people who have the courage to risk their own lives so that others may be saved from risk—who have the courage in other words to sacrifice themselves for humanity. And also

the existence of people who were courageous to play the secondary role of sacrificing in order to let the person primarily in command to achieve the goal set by him. Both are exemplary roles. The world today needs more and more such people to find solutions to problems which beset the humankind pertaining both to physical and mental suffering. □



REPETITION IN THE QURAN

Coherent with Nature

READING the Quran one finds that it repeats itself on some themes. The Quran is believed to be the book of God. If God had wished He could have made every verse deal with a separate theme; but instead certain topics have been stressed over and over again. This has been done in order to engrave the message of the Quran in the minds of its readers. Its opponents, however, have seen this in a different light and made this repetition a basis for derisive propaganda against the revealed word of God:

And they say, "It is just fables of the ancients, which he has had written down. They are dictated to him morning and evening."

(25: 6).

As Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Uthmani has noted in his Urdu commentary of the Quran, opponents of Islam used to say: "Muhammad has just noted down some stories from the People of the Book, or some people of the sort: these same stories are recited to him again and again, morning and evening, and then reproduced in a different style. That is all there is to the Quran."

There is repetition in order to engrave the message of the Quran in the minds of its readers.

It is only people who are insincere in the search for truth who say such things. Those who are sincere realize that this 'repetition' is in fact fulfilling an instinctive need of man. There is no one who does not repeat something or the other in this world. Look at smokers or tea-drinkers. Do they not repeat the same action time and again? Does a mother not repeatedly kiss her beloved child? A music lover—does he not listen to the same song over and over? If a person is attached to something he repeats it time and again without even being aware

of the repetitiveness of his action. It is only natural that one should repeat something one loves or enjoys. If, however, one is not attracted to something then repetition of it will bore one; one will be averse to hearing it even once, let alone many times.

The Quran wants people to reach this state of attachment with the word of God. It repeats themes so that people may be drawn to the source of the Quran; so that they should not pay attention to the fact

that things are being repeated but be aware of the fact that what is being said is from God and feel that repetition is required to instil the importance of what is being said, as one forgets things easily. This is the type of individual that the Quran is seeking to mould—one who is attracted to the divine world as people normally are to this world; one who finds that the word of God grows on him the more he hears it; one for whom the Quran becomes food for the soul, more welcome than any food with which one nourishes the body. Such people will not be averse to repetition of the words of the Quran, for every repeated word will bear for them a new meaning. □



OBEY GOD
OUT OF
LOVE
NOT JUST
OUT OF
DUTY

THE FAITHFUL ONES

To Deserve

A MAN born into a good family experienced a decline in his fortunes. Financially, he had reached a point where he was living on the breadline. As time went on, he eventually found himself without friends. Even his relatives deserted him. He had no one to confide in. No one even greeted him on his way.

Then one fine day, his fortunes miraculously changed, and he acquired affluence unrivalled in his town. Suddenly his old friends and relatives started flocking back to him, full of reassurances that they had always wished him well. Their reassurances, however, failed to convince him. To none of these people did he pay any regard. But there was one person who had stood by him through thick and thin. This faithful friend was shown great favour and taken into the man's confidence.

It is the spirit in which people do things that matters to God, not the physical quality of their actions. God will be well pleased with one who submitted to Him while His power still lay in the realm of the unseen.

So, it is with God. The man of sterling value in God's sight is one who proves his mettle under adverse conditions; one who recognizes the message of truth even when to do so is to swim against the tide of his environment; one who adheres to his faith, even in the face of ridicule and scorn from those who judge only by appearances.

It is the spirit in which people do things that matters to God, not the physical quality of their actions. God will be well pleased with one who submitted to Him while His power still lay in the realm of the unseen. To do this requires inward vision—the capacity to see things that do not meet the outward eye. One who has this vision will find his place with God.

This signifies that at times of destitution a person is chosen for great rewards. It is when ignorance is the order of the day that knowledge truly shows itself. One who sticks to his beliefs even when the world is pouring scorn on him is the one who will be brought close to God. □



TOWARDS GLOBAL PEACE

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



PEACE IN KASHMIR

FOR centuries Kashmir has been known as 'heaven on earth'. In the past, Kashmir was ruled by a series of rulers who were not indigenous inhabitants of the land—Pathans, Mughals, Sikhs and Dogras. But throughout this period it still remained 'heaven on earth'. People from all over the world visited Kashmir. If the Taj Mahal symbolized architectural beauty on the subcontinent, Kashmir was the symbol of the beauty of nature. This history shows that for Kashmir to make progress, it is not necessary that it should be ruled by Kashmiris. Political power is a kind of political headache. Kashmir needs constructive activities to be revived for its progress, and development, and nothing else.

The Quran mentions everything that is good for man. But it does not mention freedom or liberty. This shows that the word freedom is very deceptive. It has no real meaningfulness. A clear practical example of this can be seen in 60 Muslim countries, most of which won their political independence after a long struggle, in the course of which their people made immense sacrifices. However, in fact, these countries are not really independent in the true sense of the term. Many of them are now in the throes of civil war, where rival groups are fighting each other for power. If the Kashmiris do not realize this and stop insisting on independence, they are likely to meet the same unenviable fate. That is why they should abandon their present political struggle and, instead, concentrate on the work of positive and constructive development.

Had Kashmir treaded along the path of educational and economic advancement, today it would have been a model of progress and prosperity. But the incompetent leadership, with unrealistic dreams and empty slogans, have caused terrible damage. The time has now come for the Kashmiris to completely and permanently abandon the path of militancy, and, instead, to adopt the path of peace and progress. Only then can the dream of Kashmir as 'heaven on earth' come true. Unrealistic politics has played havoc with Kashmir, but now through realistic politics we can once again lead Kashmir to progress and development. Kashmiri Muslims have today become disillusioned. They are living in an atmosphere of mistrust.

It is indeed possible for the Kashmiris to start a new life at any given time, but for this, two conditions must be met. First, they must take responsibility for the unpleasant situation they are faced with today. Second, more importantly, they must come out of their delusional world and learn to live in the world of practical realities. They must understand that today it is the age of peace.

The only way to progress is to avoid the hurdles and avail of the opportunities to build one's life. To ignore the problems and avail of the existing opportunities.

Today everything one wants can be achieved by treading the path of peace. For their growth and advancement to take place, they must carve out a new plan of adjustment with the present situation. India is a big country. It has freedom and democracy. More than two hundred million Muslims reside here. Almost all the big Islamic institutions of the sub-continent are located in India. All across India is imprinted a thousand year history of the Muslims, which should give them courage and inspiration. Moreover, India provides great opportunities to Muslims in the footsteps of

the Sufis to follow and spread the peaceful message of Islam—a task which, according to a *Hadith*, can earn them salvation in the Hereafter.

Once, on a short visit to Karachi, a Muslim industrialist remarked that the Indian Muslims were in a far better position than they were. When he was asked the reason he said India being a vast country has a huge market for his products. What he said has now become a fact of life. In the twenty-first century, the Muslims of India have emerged as the most developed Muslim community in the whole of the subcontinent. This is in no way an exaggeration. And a comparative survey of any city can establish the validity of this statement. If the Muslims of

Kashmir whole-heartedly were to accept this then great opportunities for all kinds of development would open up to them. The prospects of progress here in the fields of education, economics and other fields are not in evidence anywhere else. The Kashmiri Muslims should abandon the policy of confrontation. They should abandon the path of militancy in favour of education and progress.

The final hour has now come for the Kashmiris to rise above their leaders and to view the whole matter afresh—not in the light of the pronouncements of their leaders but in the light of practical realities. In doing so, they must chart the course of their lives anew. There is simply no other way for them to succeed.

In an open valley just outside Srinagar are beautiful scenes of nature. From the towering peaks rivulets cascade down the valley. If one sits on the banks of the river one can notice the way the stream flows till it arrives at a boulder. It does not try to break the rock to be able to move ahead. Rather, when it meets the rock, it simply swerves to the left or to the right, around the sides of the rock, and continues its journey uninterrupted.

This is an inevitable happening with all streams and rivers, but when a foolhardy man finds a 'boulder' blocking his path, he wants to smash it so that he can forge ahead, even if that results in his journey coming to an abrupt end once and for all. This is precisely what has happened in Kashmir. This is a message from Nature to humans. This fact of Nature tells you that if in the journey of life you face a hurdle, you should not seek to hurl yourself against it to carry on ahead. Rather, what you must do is carefully avoid the hurdle and continue with your journey. This is the secret of success in life. This applies equally to communities and individuals.

The only way to progress is to avoid the hurdles and avail of the opportunities to build one's life. The only sensible way out for them was precisely what Nature itself has taught us—that is to say, to ignore the problems and avail of the existing opportunities. This is not a principle that one should adopt simply out of compulsion. This principle is a

Today, the whole world has become a global village. Now the change in the political system has become relative. Our new global conditions have made it possible for anyone living anywhere on the face of the earth to communicate with people across the world without any restrictions.

universal one. It applies to all individuals and groups. It applies just as much to Muslim-majority countries as it does to countries where Muslims are a minority.

A basic principle of success in life is that, in controversial matters, one should willingly accept whatever is available to one at the very outset. If we fail to do so in the initial stage in a bid to get more than what we are being offered, we only prolong the conflict. Then the conflict is bound to become more complicated. Consequently, we will lose even whatever was available to us in the first instance.

'A wise man is one who knows the relative value of things.' Judging by this saying, wise leadership will be aware of the dire consequences of taking to the path of militancy. This issue can be understood in the light of a verse in the Quran that explains that when the Prophet Solomon sent a letter to the Queen of Sheba, demanding that she submit, she

The programme for development should be based on three points: education, economic development, and spreading the message of peace, harmony and spirituality to the people.

sought the advice of her courtiers, who told her that because they had considerable military strength, there was no need for them to submit to anyone. The Queen replied thus: "Surely, when mighty kings invade a country, they despoil it and humiliate its noblest inhabitants—these men will do the same". (27: 34) Here the Quran stresses to a very important fact, and that is that when one confronts a powerful ruler, one must think carefully of the consequences of doing so.

If the consequences would prove counter-productive, then confrontation must be avoided. Experience proves that confronting a very powerful ruler is almost always counter-productive. It causes death and destruction on a massive scale, and the honourable are humiliated. That is why confronting a powerful ruler must be avoided as far as possible, even if the ruler is just and virtuous. But if certain people choose to ignore this advice or principle, and seek to directly confront a powerful ruler, it is pointless for them to complain later on about the loss of life and property. They ought to know that the destruction that they suffer is the price they have to pay for their confrontation with an established ruler. Those who adopt the path of militancy in order to fight existing governments have necessarily to pay such a price. It is simply impossible for a certain group to make a mistake and then expect another group to pay the price. There is a valuable lesson from

the words of the Queen of Sheba as recorded in the Quran, The Queen adopted a wise policy that avoided the possibility of destruction and oppression by the army.

Global Opportunities

Today, the whole world has become a global village. Now the change in the political system has become relative. Our new global conditions have made it possible for anyone living anywhere on the face of the earth to communicate with people across the world without any restrictions. In such a situation, even if people and groups do not form part of the political class or do not have a state of their own, they can still have all the benefits which in earlier times they could have had only if they were part of the ruling class or had their own independent state. Numerous small countries or territories have flourished and emerged as prosperous commercial and financial hubs across the world—Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, Dubai, Taiwan, for instance. Man is a psychologically complex creature. If one is driven by negative and destructive emotions and impulses, one's whole personality turns negative. Conversely, if one is driven by positive thinking, one will have a positive personality. This rule applies as much to individuals as it does to groups, communities and countries.

A basic principle of success in life is that, in controversial matters, one should willingly accept whatever is available to one at the very outset.

Moving Towards a Solution

In the history of a country it sometimes happens that its course of progress comes to a standstill. At such times, it becomes imperative for it to take bold steps if it wants to move ahead. Naturally, this is a sensitive matter and such steps might go wholly against popular sentiment. This is why such courageous decisions are often taken by strong military rulers rather than democratically elected politicians who, being chosen by their people, have to pander to their emotions and prejudices and so are generally unable to take such steps as might hurt their sentiments.

Let me cite one instance to make this point. The French President Charles de Gaulle (d. 1970) was a top general in the French Army, but later manipulated his way to the post of President. On the face of it, this was an anti-democratic move, but by doing so, de Gaulle was able to save France in a manner that a democratically elected government

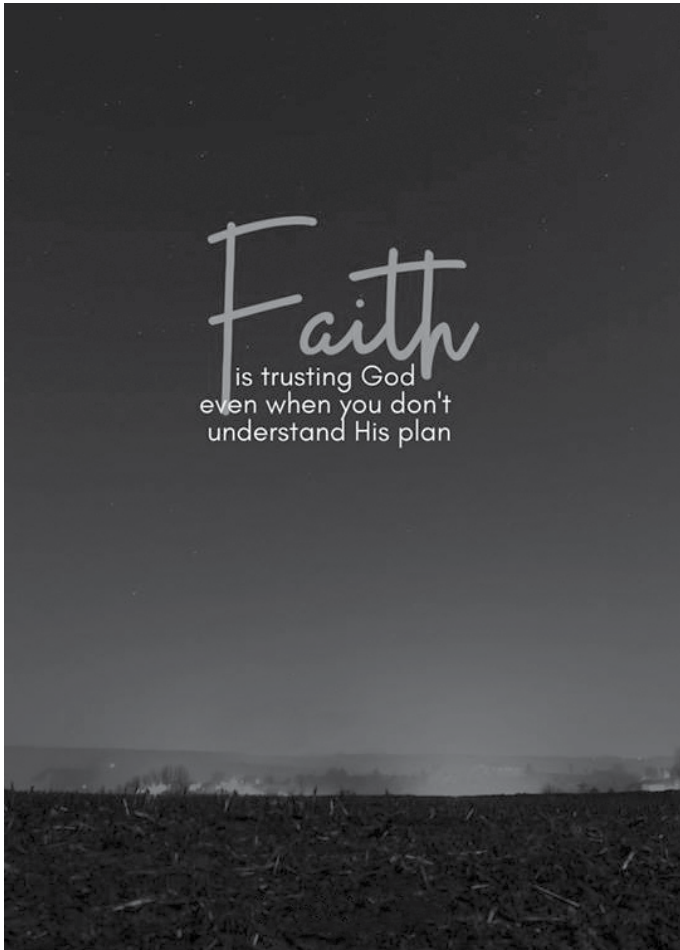
could not possibly have adopted. He unilaterally announced the end of French rule in a number of French colonies in Africa and elsewhere, because this was proving to be a burden for France, rendering France as the 'sick man' of Europe in the wake of the Second World War, when all European countries except for France were making great strides towards progress and development. It was this decision, against the wishes of the people, which made France one of the developed nations of the world. Obviously, this move, which was widely unpopular in France, was a necessary one for the greater good of the country, but only a bold and strong ruler could do this, unmindful of popular sentiment and opposition.

Now there are two starting points. One is to seek to change the status quo by removing the roadblock for further action. The other is to accept the status quo as it is and to make concerted efforts to avail of the opportunities which are already available in the given status quo. This second approach is what is called 'positive status quoism'. This is in accordance both with reason and with the teachings of Islam. The Quran enjoins: "Reconciliation is the best. (4: 128) That is, the best way to settle a conflict is to follow the policy of reconciliation. In other words, conflicts are best resolved by the contending parties avoiding confrontation and by coming to a mutual understanding.

This is the world of realities: nothing positive can come here from emotional politics. The right way for the Kashmiris would be to make a reassessment of their past and, chart a new course for themselves in order to build their future. It is a fact that they have lost the first chance. Now the only possible way for them is to consciously grasp the second chance and wholeheartedly make use of it to their own advantage. This programme for their future should be based on three points: education, economic development, and spreading the message of peace, harmony and spirituality to the people. They must completely abandon politics and the path of armed struggle. They must set the feet of this whole generation on the path of education. To this end, they should focus their attention on building high-class educational institutions. For at least 25 years they should spend all their energies on the field of education.

So far as the economic field is concerned, there are extraordinary opportunities for business and industry in the state. Kashmiris must productively use the vast economic and other resources which are still to a large extent lying untapped. The third field is that of the communication of the message of peace and spirituality among the

people. If peace prevails in Kashmir, the tourism industry will flourish. This will be a great opportunity for the Kashmiris to spread the message of peace and spirituality to the world, and this will contribute to success in both this world and the next. □



LESSONS FROM NATURE

Silent Teachers

ADAM, the first man, had two sons, one of whom killed the other in anger while quarrelling. This was the first incident of the killing of a man in the human existence and the murderer had no idea of what should be done with the dead body of his brother.

The Quran mentions this incident. "Then God sent a raven which scratched the earth so that He might show him how to hide the corpse of his brother. 'Alas!' he cried, 'Am I not able even to be like this raven, so that I may hide the corpse of my brother?' And he repented." (The Quran 5: 31). Since this event took place, God has continuously been sending one creature after another to us to guide us as to how we should lead our lives. But man seldom takes heed of such occurrences.

Our planning is so often faulty and the efforts we make so often inadequate that failures in many spheres are commonplace. But, really, all it would take to achieve success would be to give further thought to the problems besetting us and a deeper appreciation of the strategy we need to adopt. It is a wise man who learns from his mistakes.

The following incident observed by a person in his house has a very important lesson for the humankind about the quality of human endeavour. It seems that two swallows once built a nest under the eaves by bringing small quantities of mud and laboriously attaching it bit by bit to the underside of the wooden roof. It took several days of continuous effort to make the nest solid enough for them to lay their eggs in it. Sad to say, while the hatching process was going on, the nest suddenly gave way one day, fell to the ground and was destroyed. The weight of four eggs and two swallows had been too much for it.

But quite undaunted, the birds began fluttering around looking for some safer place to reconstruct their home. They finally found a niche with a rougher surface, which would give the nest better support. Whereas the swallows had made their first nest just from mud, they made this one from a mixture of mud, grass and straw. This combination

of materials proved much stronger than plain mud and this nest was also more firmly fixed in position than the previous one. The eggs they laid in it then were successfully hatched and this new, reinforced nest continued to provide shelter for the baby swallows until they grew up and flew away to make their own homes.

There is a great lesson in this for all of us; if a bird or animal fails in some effort, it seeks to understand the reason for its failure. It does not simply give up and succumb to adversity. It casts about for some other, better way of doing things and rectifies its errors by harder work and better planning. Human beings would do well to follow this example. Our planning is so often faulty and the efforts we make so often inadequate that failures in many spheres are commonplace. But, really, all it would take to achieve success would be to give further thought to the problems besetting us and a deeper appreciation of the strategy we need to adopt. It is a wise man who learns from his mistakes. □



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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



SPIRITUAL QUEST

IT was Thursday morning, 17th June 1999. I was in Manchester, England, staying in the house of an Arab brother Alaref Ahmad. While I was sitting in my room on the upper floor, I heard a gentle knock on the door. When I opened it, I found a child of about five years of age. It was Qanita, the first-born daughter of Brother Alaref. She asked in all innocence and gentleness, "Do you need anything?" (*turidu haja*). Perhaps it was her mother who had sent her, and although this was a simple question, I was quite overwhelmed by this innocent voice; to the extent that I could not utter a single word in reply. This was a normal incident, but in my mind, it transformed into a supra-normal event. Children are like the flowers of God and little angels. I felt as if God Himself had sent me an angel to discover and meet my needs.

At this moment, a famous *Hadith* came to mind: "Your Lord descends to this worldly heaven every day, looks at His servants and says, 'Is there anyone who has a need and asks Me, that I may give it to him?'" (Sahih Muslim)

'Do you need anything?' was a short question that came from an innocent soul, but it was enough to cause a great revolution in my inner being; referred to by modern scholars as 'brainstorming'.

For a while, I felt that I could see the whole of the universe on the screen of my mind. This was a great spiritual experience which cannot be expressed in human words. In the beginning, it seemed as though God, through a little angel, was saying, "O my servant, do you need anything?" Then, the matter extended to include the whole universe with its heavens and its earth.

In fact, it was only a little girl at the door of my room, asking, "Do you need anything?" but in its extended sense, it was as if the whole universe was asking the same question.

The vast heaven was saying, "Do you need a shelter? Here I am to provide you with one, because God has ordered me to do so." The gleaming sun was saying, "Do you need light? I am here to supply it and transform your darkness into light." The majestic mountains were announcing, "Would you like to be on the highest level in all humanity? I am here at your service to help you attain that high position." The flowing water in the riverbeds was murmuring, "Do you want to have a spiritual bath to purify your soul? I am here to offer you that." And the gusting wind was asking, "Do you want to tour the universe to see the wondrous signs of God? Here is my back for you to ride on to embark on such a divine journey." The trees were whispering, "Would you like to have a personality as radiant as ours? We are here to make your wish a reality." The fruits on their branches and the crops in their husks were declaring, "If you crave nourishment for your intellectual and spiritual life, we are here to provide you with it."

While this reel was playing in my mind, I heard birds chirping, "O servant of God! Here is good news for you: If you have a need, then God has made the whole universe to serve your needs. God is so generous that He has created the whole of the universe to be at your service, day and night. In addition to this, if you show thankfulness to God, He will give you what is greater than all of this—Eternal Paradise in which there will be "...neither fear nor grievance" (6: 48).

Then, the following Quranic verse came to mind: "And He gave you all that you asked for" (14: 34). This means whatever is needed for man to live a good life on this earth has been prepared in advance by God,

Here is good news for you: If you have a need, then God has made the whole universe to serve your needs. God is so generous that He has created the whole of the universe to be at your service, day and night.

directly and indirectly. Horses, for instance, were directly created; whereas aeroplanes were provided indirectly. The travelling of the voice through the air is an example of direct provision, while its transmission by means of electronic equipment is a form of indirect provision. Perhaps, this is what is meant by the following Quranic verse: “And (He has created) horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride, and as an adornment. And He has created (other) things which are beyond your knowledge” (16: 8).

God Almighty says, “O you who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you. And be grateful to God, if it is Him you worship” (2: 172). This means God Almighty has created everything, imaginable and unimaginable; great and small, in the most perfect form. Then, He gave all this free to man. The only price to be paid for these endless blessings is thankfulness; it is man’s recognition, from the depths of his heart, that God is the Giver and man the receiver.

In this way, the spiritual quest, in my view, is a means for the creature—man—to make contact with his Creator—God. □



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GREAT GOALS

Surmounting Difficulties

THE English poet William Blake said: “Great things are done when men and mountains meet. This is not done by jostling in the street.” This is quite true. It is a fact that to achieve some great goal great acts are needed. It is only after scaling the heights of a mountain that one reaches the top. Just raising slogans or making speeches at big gatherings does not mean that any great work can be accomplished.

In order to undertake any great work and bring it to its conclusion it is necessary that we try to estimate and understand the situation thoroughly. It is necessary that we be willing to take stock of our resources and external possibilities and only then go ahead. We must fully grasp the fact that, when we begin our journey, we are going to confront many other travellers on our way.

Then we should also be willing to make every sacrifice that our cause entails, this may mean expenditure of time and money; it may mean the relinquishing of opinions or the suppression of emotions. Sometimes we have to reckon with others, and sometimes it is ourselves that we have to reckon with. There are times when we can walk and times when we can only halt in our steps.

No great goal is ever realized without facing difficulties; without surmounting great obstacles. The entire process involves a great struggle.

No great goal is ever realized without facing difficulties; without surmounting great obstacles. The entire process involves a great struggle. Activity that benefits the coming generations when we have passed away; which shapes our future; which changes the course of history—demands untiring struggle and infinite wisdom. Those who think that organizing processions and raising slogans is all that is called for are grossly underestimating the importance of the task at hand. Such actions serve only to worsen the situation. They cannot produce any enduring benefit for posterity. □



CREATIVE THINKING

Mind Power

OPTICIANS usually have arrangements for eye-testing on the premises so that customers can have their eyes tested and buy their spectacles all in the same shop. One particular optician had a small shop which could not permit eye-tests to be carried out, for a distance-vision chart has to be 18 feet away from the client. And this shop was only 9 feet in length. But the shop keeper was unperturbed by this limitation. When asked how he proposed to do eye-testing in such a confined space, he said "Simple! We just fix a mirror on the wall, and there you are ! The distance is doubled!" The clients could then

be asked to read the chart through the mirror because the reflection would have the effect of doubling the distance. Undeterred by the acute shortage of space, this optician had shown great ingenuity in solving his problem.

***All of your limitations
can be quickly
overcome provided
you put to good use
the natural gifts
bestowed upon you
by Almighty God.***

This principle is applicable in most of life's arenas. When you have limited opportunities, when your horizons seem narrow, there is no need to become defeatist , it is simply a question of racking your brains and you will be able to "convert" your "9 feet shop" into an "18-foot shop".

If your home is small you can always make space by arranging things creatively as per need. When you do not have enough resources to make investments, your basic honesty is your best guarantee of success. When you do not possess university degrees or other high qualifications, your courtesy and hard work will in large measure compensate for this. When there are no chances of overcoming your opponent by being tough then your wisest policy would be to win his heart, when your share in political fields is limited you can still score in the economic field and achieve a different but equally important set of objectives. When you feel you are in a weak position because your sympathisers are few in number, you can make up for this by encouraging unifying forces and striving towards efficient organization of whatever human resources are available.

Every small shop can be converted into a big shop. A shop is small only so long as you do not use your brains to expand it. All of your limitations can be quickly overcome provided you put to good use the natural gifts bestowed upon you by Almighty God. □

SOUND JUDGEMENT

Accountability

ABU MOOSA AL-ASHARI was one of the leading Companions of the Prophet Muhammad. During the Prophet's time he was appointed governor of Aden. Then, during the rule of the second Caliph Umar, he was given the governorship of Basra.

Abu Moosa said that a *qazi* (judge) should not pass judgement until the truth is to him "as clear as day". When Abu Moosa's statement was reported to Umar, the Caliph ratified it, saying that this should be the policy of every *qazi*.

In fact, the principle that Abu Moosa laid down is applicable not only to judges but to every human being as well. It is not only judges who have to deal with other people's cases: every human being is required at times to make decisions regarding matters pertaining to others. With an ordinary individual it is a personal decision all the same. The only difference is that a judge's word is law, while ordinary people cannot enforce their decisions by legal means.

Still everyone will finally have to answer before God for every utterance and judgement that they make. In real terms, therefore there is no difference between someone who passes judgement in a court of law, and one who makes a decision at home, office or village. Both will be taken to task in exactly the same fashion. Those who believe that one day they will come before God should follow Abu Moosa al-Ashari's advice: they should not pronounce judgement on a matter until the rights and wrongs of it have become as clear to them as day is clear from night; if the truth is not "as clear as day" then there is only one thing to do, and that is hold one's peace.

Those who really fear God should only pass judgement on matters which are absolutely clear to them. The judgement of what they are not clear about should be left to God. □

A judge should not pronounce judgement on a matter until the rights and wrongs of it have become as clear to him as day is clear from night.



MEANINGFUL LIFE

Achievement

AN express train is tearing at full speed towards its destination. A continuous spectacle of lush crops and brimming streams and brooklets flashes by on either side. However much the scene attracts attention towards itself, the express train shows no interest in it. It ploughs through plain and mountain, over land and river, without reducing its speed. Small stations are dotted along the line, but even they do not interrupt the train's motion. It carries on, as if it will stop nowhere.

It is much the same with a purposeful life. One who has adopted a purpose in life will fix his attention upon it. He will not waste his time with peripheral issues. A purposeful person is like a traveller who seeks to spend every moment of his time steering himself towards his destination. Alluring worldly attractions hover enticingly before this traveller, but he closes his eyes to them. Luxurious shade invites him to be cooled from the scorching sun. Lavish mansions call him to rest his

feet from the long, hard road. But he has no time for these things; all he sees is the goal he has set before himself. All kinds of different requirements confront him, but he steers clear of them and continues on his way. His determination to reach his destination does not alter with the ups and downs of life. The speed and direction of his journey remain constant through thick and thin.

For life to be invested with meaning, it is essential that one should set a target for oneself. One should be absolutely certain of the worthwhile nature of one's chosen target.

A purposeful person is quite unlike a wayward traveller who, lacking direction, sometimes sets off in one direction and sometimes in another. He knows where he is going. The

road that he must tread clearly stretches out before his eyes. There is no question of him interrupting his journey or diverting his attention towards other things. He travels on and on until his purpose is fulfilled, his destination reached.

For life to be invested with meaning, it is essential that one should set a target for oneself. One should be absolutely certain of the worthwhile nature of one's chosen target. In pursuit of it, one must have the total support of one's conscience. It should permeate one's entire being, running through one's body as blood runs through one's veins. It is by

concentrating his mind and setting his heart on a certain target that man becomes different from animals. If he lacks a target in life, there is no difference between him and beasts of the jungle. When one adopts a dominating purpose, one's life undergoes a drastic change. One becomes a completely different person. So total is one's absorption in one's quest in life that one has no time for petty side issues. One pursues one's goal with unswerving dedication, not resting until it is achieved. □



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WISDOM FROM THE PROPHET

Gift to Humankind

THERE are three things that are especially pleasing to God: that you should worship Him, ascribing no partners unto Him; that you should all cling to the rope of God and not be divided among yourselves; and that you should have a benevolent attitude towards those whom God has put in charge of your affairs. And three things cause Him immense displeasure: idle talk, asking too many questions and wasting money. (Sahih Muslim)

Worshipping God means concentrating one's entire attention on Him. One who truly worships Gods feels empty if there is no place in his life for God. To ascribe partners to God, on the other hand, is to make something besides God the focus of one's attention. To forsake all forms of false worship, and to serve one God alone, is the essence of Islam. When one does this, one becomes a selfless soul; one thinks of others before oneself. Those who have developed such qualities will remain united among themselves; they will not split up into sects. They will have a benevolent, co-operative attitude towards others who are in positions of responsibility; they will not set themselves up as rivals to those who are in power. They will work for the common good and contribute towards the benefit of humankind in general. Pleasing God

It is pleasing to God that you should have a benevolent attitude towards those whom God has put in charge of your affairs.

by serving His creation will be their goal as they are the true worshippers of God. This is the understanding of how the three things—worshipping God, not being divided and an attitude of benevolence are interconnected.

The three things which are displeasing to God are such that all the three if present in a person will cause him to be a person who is not beneficial to the entire society. Idle talk and prattle harms other people's reputation, robs their peace of mind, can cause quarrels and fights, ill will, lead to spread of false

news etc. Asking unnecessary questions, prying in the personal affairs of others, asking questions based on false suspicions make a person unwelcome in gatherings. Likewise spending money extravagantly robs one of the chances of spending it on constructive activities.

The above wisdom taught by the Prophet is applicable so much more in the present times where we are witnessing so much of mayhem in the societies where people are prying in others' matters unrestrained; and materialistic culture is the rule of the day. □

THE SUCCESSFUL METHOD

Goodwill

A PUBLISHER, who had despatched ten thousand copies of a book specially printed for a big institution, was suddenly summoned to meet its manager. No sooner had he set foot in his office than the manager began to heap abuse on him for having sent him spoilt copies of the book. "Look at these edges," he shouted, "Look at how badly cut they are!" While the manager continued to vent his anger on him, the publisher picked up several copies and examined them. They were indeed defective. When the manager's fury had abated somewhat, the publisher very quietly asked him why he was so upset. "It is our loss and it is, therefore, for us to feel bad about it." This stopped the manager short in his tirade. "What on earth do you mean?" he asked. "How is it your loss?"

The publisher said, "Obviously I cannot expect you to accept this whole consignment in the condition it is in. I shall of course, take every copy back and have fresh consignment printed, at my own expense. It is my responsibility to make good the defect." When the manager heard this, he immediately softened. All his harshness vanished. The printer's admission of his mistake and his willingness to compensate had wrought a kind of miracle. This offer went completely beyond his expectations and it was quite natural that he should be impressed by the magnanimity of the gesture. "No," he said, "Why should you bear such heavy expenses?" Hearing the kindness of his tone, the publisher ventured to make another suggestion "I have an idea of how I can rectify this," he said, "Let me have few copies of the book, and if it works, there will be no need to reprint them." The manager agreed, the printer took ten copies, re-cut them with great care, then brought them back and showed them to the manager. The latter was quite satisfied that they were now in excellent shape and requested him to have all of the defective books similarly re-cut.

'I am ready to admit to a one-foot fault even when it is only an inch in the eyes of the customer,' said the printer. "It is very important to make such concessions if one is to be successful in business. A satisfied customer creates no problems and the moment a fault comes to my notice, I invariably inform the customer before he has even suspected that anything is wrong. Then I leave it to the customer to suggest how matters should be rectified. As a rule, this elicits the customer's sympathy and the matter ends with absolutely no ill-will on either side." □

AN IDENTITY CARD

For Privileges

A VILLAGE boy came to the city. As he was walking along the road, he passed by a school. It was anniversary day, and hundreds of school boys had formed a line outside one of the windows. As he approached closer, he was able to see that sweets were being distributed. Each boy was taking his share and going away. The village boy also joined the line, and waited for his turn, thinking that just as all the other boys were being given a packet of sweets each, so he would also be presented with one.

Finally he reached the window and stretched out his hand eagerly. A voice came from behind the window: "Where is your identity card?" The boy of course, was unable to show a card, and he was turned away empty handed. He realized that the sweets were not for anyone who turned up at the window; they were for those who had studied the whole year in the school.

It will be much the same on the Last day. The Last Day is the day when God's judgement will come to pass. All humankind will be gathered before their Lord. People will find their rewards with Him. But the

***Those who neglected
God in this world will
be neglected by
Him on that day.
They will reach God's
world, but will not
be able to
behold Him.***

rewards of that day will only be for those who have qualified for them; they will only be for those who are able to show an "identity card" proving their eligibility for the favours that are being bestowed.

The time is fast approaching when all one will want to see, feel and adore will be what is with the Lord of the World. Everyone will be vying to be amongst those brought close to Him. The most honourable position that one will be able to occupy will be to be counted

among His humble servants. But this privilege will only be for those, who, before the coming of that day, have shown themselves deserving of divine approval. Those who neglected God in this world will be neglected by Him on that day. They will reach God's world, but will not be able to behold Him. That will be the day when all secrets are divulged; but even then they will find themselves left out in the cold, and not allowed to share in the wonders that will unfold. □

REMEMBRANCE OF DEATH

Not Morbid

HISTORY is a witness to some famous people's futile attempt towards conquering death. Take the example of Louis XI (1423-1483), the king of France, who ruled the country for a period of 23 years, from 1461 to 1483. His reign had been a long one but death was the last word that he would allow to be uttered in his presence. He did not want to die. During the last days of his life he went in seclusion in an enclosed fort where only selected people could enter. Around the fort was dug a deep trench so that no one could gain access to it.

All of the twenty-four hours, forty archers remained on duty, over and above which forty horsemen patrolled the fort night and day. Whoever was seen making any unauthorized effort to enter the fort was arrested and executed on the spot. All kinds of luxuries were provided inside the fort so that the king never became melancholic. King Louis XI was so eager to live as long as possible that he had given orders that the word 'death' should never be uttered before him. An expert doctor attended him day and night. This doctor drew a monthly salary of ten thousand gold crowns. In those days in Europe no military officer earned such a salary even with forty years' experience to his credit.

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

Finally paralysis attacked him on 30th August 1483; death at last conquered him. The last words uttered by him were: "I am not as ill as you people suppose." All his efforts went in vain. Finally the king of France had learnt that no one could conquer death.

While King Louis was an example of the one who did not want to die and was therefore constantly trying to forget and to conquer death,

*Were man to
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transformations.*

there are others who think about death very often. Now, in such cases the question arises, does remembering death help us in any way and does it have any benefits or will it lead people into fear and negativity?

The Guardian weekly quoted Linda Kurtz in the following words: "Death is not the last taboo at all, but a very modern one. In this era of demystification, death becomes perverse and more mysterious, more terrible, than ever before. We need to have death back again. Its transcendence puts banalities, impotence, frustration, vanities and some kinds of love in their places. Contemplation of terminal issues is not in the least morbid, but life enhancing".

How so are they life enhancing, we might ask? Were man to remember the reality of death, his life would undergo the most sublime of transformations. It would drive home the point with tremendous force how inane it was to oppress the poor, unfortunate individuals who crossed his path and fell into his clutches. He would realize how senseless it was to ill-treat others, how mindless it was to entertain ideas of his own greatness, for greatness which cannot endure is of no intrinsic value, how useless it was to have accumulated wealth which is of no use after death.

Not keeping the reality of death in mind makes man drift through life, an unthinking, pleasure-seeking, power-hungry, fame-loving, materially ambitious creature who enjoys making friends and accumulating riches and spending time in merry making. He revels in trivial distractions. Death comes unannounced and unbidden. In an instant he is bereft of all his worldly possessions, his friends, his loved ones, his pleasures, his riches—all that he holds dear and he is carried away to the utter solitude of the grave.

The Messenger of God said: "These hearts rust just as iron rusts" When someone asked what is the method of polishing, the Prophet replied, "Frequent remembrance of death and recitation of the Quran." □



Persistence

The only condition of success is continuous effort, that is, to make such unflagging efforts, as are essential to achieve the desired objectives.

GLOBAL WARMING

A Divine Warning

THE *Times of India* of October 26th, 2018 has the following report under the heading "Air scrubbed off CO₂ could be a reality soon—A radical idea takes shape in race to stop global warming. With time running out to avoid dangerous global warming, America's leading scientific body urged the federal government to begin a research programme focused on developing technologies that can remove vast quantities of carbon-dioxide from the atmosphere to help slow climate change".

Scientists from all over the world are repeatedly emphasizing that global warming is the greatest danger of present times. Both print and electronic media inform people daily of this perilous situation. Reports based on the findings of international scientists, such as "Doomsday Not Far" (*Hindustan Times*, December 8, 2007) and 'Five Years to Doomsday' telecast on December 20, 2007 on an Indian TV programme warned that climate change is now turning into climate disaster. As a result, the day is fast approaching when human beings, regardless of where they are living, will no longer be able to inhabit this planet earth.

As we all know, there are huge ice caps at both the north and south poles. These are vast reservoirs of fresh water, but they are now melting at an alarming rate. Also there are huge, mountain-top glaciers,—gigantic storehouses of drinking water—which, as a consequence of global warming, are likewise rapidly melting and their stored water is draining off into the oceans through the rivers.

This is going to result in two unbearable situations. On the one hand, very soon the level of water in the seas will rise, inundating coastal cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, etc. On the other hand, the non-coastal areas will suffer from an intolerable water shortage. It is predicted by some scholars that the shortage of water will become so acute that even a Third World War might take place over this issue.

Scientists from all over the world are repeatedly emphasizing that global warming is the greatest danger of present times. Both print and electronic media inform people daily of this perilous situation.

The rivers are always full of water, because the ice in the mountains keeps gradually melting the whole year round and this water continuously comes to the rivers through tributaries. But when all this ice has melted, naturally the rivers will run dry. And all their fresh water will be mixed with the salty water of the ocean. The ocean will be full of water but, being too salty, it will be fit neither for irrigation nor for drinking. The situation prevailing will be somewhat like that portrayed by Samuel Coleridge in his poem *'The Ancient Mariner'*: "Water, water, everywhere; nor any drop to drink".

God's prophets have constantly told us that the present world will not be eternal, that it is perpetually on its countdown, and that a time will come when its term will expire and it will come to its end. All the

Corruption has set in on land and sea because of the evil which men's hands have done; and so He will make them taste the fruit of some of their doings, so that they may turn back from evil. (Quran)

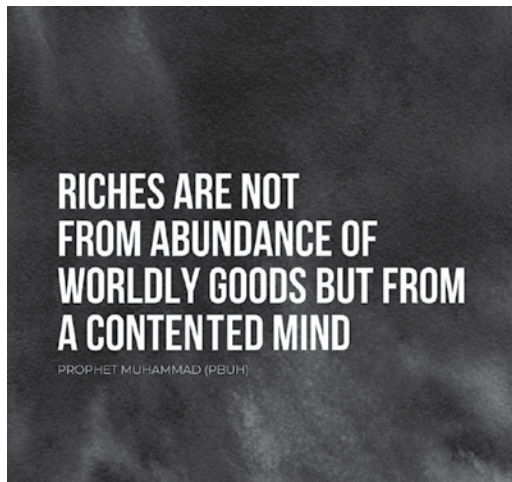
scientific evidence tells us that this countdown is approaching its final number. The scientists of the 20th century discovered the law of entropy and concluded that the world's energy is continuously on the decrease, and that this process cannot be reversed. Therefore, it is certain that after a fixed period of time the present world will come to its end. Now the scientists of the 21st century have told us, according to their researches, that the time for the end of the present world has come very close. It could even be a mere 10 to 20 years. All these revelations which are being covered in the media under the heading of 'global warming' are in fact 'divine warning'.

Corruption has set in on land and sea because of the evil which men's hands have done; and so He will make them taste the fruit of some of their doings, so that they may turn back from evil. (30: 41). This is a declaration by the Creator that, according to His plan, this period of the world has come to its end. According to this plan, the first phase has expired. Now the time is not far away when the present world will be replaced by its second phase. The first phase, meant purely as a test for humankind, was temporary. The second phase will be for the result of that test, and it will be eternal.

In the present world, man has been given freedom of action. This is not because he deserves freedom on account of his general prowess: it was allotted to him temporarily for the purpose of testing him. It was meant to see who makes the proper use of freedom and who misuses it. According to the system of nature, the record of every person is

being prepared. This record will be presented before the Creator in the next stage of life. Those whose records show that they made proper use of their freedom "will find a place in Paradise where they will live eternally." (Quran) They will be accorded by their Creator a place where they will lead an eternal life of comfort and happiness. On the contrary, those whose record shows that they misused their freedom will be consigned by their Creator to punishment where, in the words of Jesus Christ: "There will be wailing and weeping for all eternity." (Matthew 13: 42).

Now the time has finally come for all humankind to arise from their slumber. By engaging themselves in introspection they must reform themselves. They must make the attainment of a successful life in the next phase of life their sole concern. Every one must know that the chance they have been given in the present world is the first and last chance. No other chance awaits them. Global warming tells us that the point of no return has already been reached. Let us avail of this opportunity before the time is up. After this, no one will be given any further opportunity to come back to the present world. Nor will there be any opportunity in the next world to atone for one's misconduct or be rewarded for the belated performance of worthy deeds. □



RIGHT CHOICE

Pragmatism

MACHINES, for instance, clocks and watches generally run on a system of cog wheels. The movement of one such wheel sets another in motion. If either of the wheels does not mesh with the other, neither will the cog wheel move, nor will the machine be set in motion.

The same applies to human plans in the modern world. There are two “cog-wheels” here as well. And life’s system functions properly only when the two engage and work together in unison.

One wheel in this world is that of man, while the other is that of concomitant circumstances. Here, the individual can be effective only to the extent that external circumstances will permit. Given this state of affairs, wisdom lies in his knowing what is possible and what is not possible for him in terms of his circumstances.

Where interests are in conflict, the actual point at issue is not what should be the settlement from the point of view of justice; the actual solution to be sought in such a situation, is that which is possible in practical terms. That is why, in such instances, one should be willing to accept the possible, instead of engaging in futile hostilities over the issue of ideal justice. Such efforts will lead to nothing but further loss.

The same is the case with nations. Here, too, the leaders should look to what is achievable and what is not in respect of actual circumstances. The degree of success achieved by the individual or the nation is in direct proportion to the effective interlocking of “cog-wheel”, within a broad framework of non-adherence to rigid ideologies.

Those nations who understood the laws of nature and started their national journey in accordance with these laws made steady progress and have become developed countries of the world. This principle of nature, in brief, favours healthy competition. Their leaders granted freedom to their citizens and opened up opportunities to achieve the desired success by proving their capability in a highly competitive field. These leaders limited the government sphere to law and order, thus granting its citizen full freedom of action in other fields. As a result everyone found unhampered opportunities for the optimal development of personal potential.

They did not attempt to pour society into the mould of a fabricated ideology as the basis for national progress. Instead they looked only at what was naturally sustainable and adopted it.

On the contrary those nations whose theorists clung to a contrived ideology, attempted to re-structure the whole of society accordingly. When society refused to accept this, the rebels were killed as if they had no more significance than insects. This scheme of things was against nature and that is why, after a tumultuous struggle they met with failure. Having properly understood actual conditions and circumstances, they should have left society to proceed unhindered on the thoroughfare of nature. In this way an atmosphere of healthy competition would have been produced, and the capabilities of all their citizens would have played their role in the process of progress and development. But this was not to be. Ideological fanaticism produced the logic of coercion, which vitiated everything which came within its orbit.

The right way to proceed in this world is to allow things to take their natural course without placing any obstacles in their path. If any wielder of power conceives of a plan which in his view is superior (whatever its actual merits may be), he should work towards its implementation along peaceful lines, remaining strictly within the sphere of persuasion. He should wait also for the appropriate moment when people's thinking has changed, so that his plan may be carried into effect, in consonance with the law of nature itself. In that way, its outcome will be beneficial to all.

The actual point worth considering in the building of the social system is not some ideological scheme of things formulated by any particular leader, but what is humanly achievable from the practical standpoint. The part played by any given leader in the overhaul of the social system and, moreover in its subsequent consolidation, is only fifty per cent. The remaining fifty per cent is attributable to external circumstances. If a leader, failing to grasp this reality, is under the misapprehension that the entire country is his personal fiefdom, it would be the gravest blunder on his part to force upon the people his personal ideology. This would be verging on madness, for whatever he then did as a result of his misunderstanding should culminate not in construction but the very opposite.

It is good to be an idealist, but it has to be conceded that the attainment of the ideal in social life is seldom within the realms of the possible. The secret of success in restructuring society is for leaders and followers alike to aim at elevated goals, while taking care to subordinate personal idealism to overarching practicalities. □

THE PRACTICAL APPROACH

For Success

*Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) a French philosopher and scientist said:
By space the universe encompasses and swallows me as an atom;
by thought I encompass it.*

MAN has been created by God with two opposing yet complementary qualities: the spiritual and the physical. On the one hand is his mind, in respect of which he finds himself limitless. He can think anything he wishes; there are simply no boundaries to his thinking.

Man is constantly under trial in this world. To pass all tests, he must learn his practical limitations vis à vis his intellectual limitlessness.

Yet, in his physical existence, man is extremely limited. He is bound by innumerable kinds of constraints. The greatest limiting factor which man faces is death. Death nullifies all greatness in man.

This is man's severest test. In all his apparent greatness, he must acknowledge how humble is his condition. Passing from a limitless to a limited environment he must acknowledge the confines within which he lives. He must accept restrictions in an atmosphere of freedom.

Man is constantly under trial in this world. To pass all tests, he must learn his practical limitations vis à vis his intellectual limitlessness. By so doing, he can save himself from all misapprehensions, and can exercise his free will in the sphere of reality.

So far as animals are concerned, their thinking capacity barely goes beyond the immediate needs of survival. They are, in this sense, like living machines. By contrast, the area of man's thinking is vast. The greatest test of humanity is to discover a balance between thinking and action. □

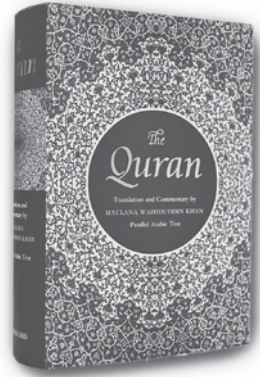


THE WORD OF GOD

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 humankind, along with divine admonition, and stresses the importance of man's discovery of the Truth on a spiritual and intellectual level.

Translated from Arabic and commentary by
Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



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

Praise be to God, to whom belongs all that the heavens and the earth contain and praise be to Him in the Hereafter. He is the All Wise, the All Aware. He knows whatever goes into the earth and whatever comes forth from it, and whatever descends from heaven and whatever ascends into it. He is the Merciful, the Forgiving. (34: 1-2)

This universe is an introduction to its Creator. Its terrifying vastness reveals the majesty of its Creator. The utter perfection of its harmony indicates that its Creator is a perfect and complete being. The fact of the universe being extremely congenial and conducive to the nourishment of human life clearly shows that its Creator is extremely kind and merciful towards His creations.

One who ponders over the mysteries of the universe will be totally absorbed in the realization of God's majesty and perfection. He will be convinced that from the beginning of time till the end of eternity, all majesty pertains to the one and only God and to none other than Him.

Those who deny the truth declare, 'The Hour will never come upon us.' Say, 'Yes, by my Lord, it will surely come upon you! Who knows the unseen. Not the smallest particle in the heavens or the earth, or anything less or greater than that escapes Him; all is recorded in an open Book. He will surely reward those who believe and do good deeds: they shall have forgiveness and an honourable provision.' But those who strive against Our signs, trying to defeat them, will suffer a painful torment. Those who have been given knowledge know that what has been revealed to you from your Lord is the truth, and that it guides to the path of the Almighty, the Praiseworthy. (34: 3-6)

The addressees of the Quran were not disbelievers in the Day of Judgement. It was just that they did not believe that Judgement Day would bring them humiliation and punishment. The world they lived in appeared safe to them and they could not, therefore, understand how they would be in jeopardy on reaching the world Hereafter.

This truth about life and the universe is found in all divine scriptures. It is the Quran's mission to reveal this reality in its pure and unadulterated form. Now, those who take a stand in opposition to this mission are indulging in the most improper bravado. Before God, they will be treated as deserving of the severest punishment.

Those who deny the truth say, 'Shall we point out to you a man who will tell you that when you are broken up into particles, you will be put together again in a new creation? Has he invented a lie about God, or is he afflicted with madness?' Indeed no. It is those who do not believe in the Hereafter who will suffer torment, for they have strayed far into error. Do they not observe how they are encompassed by what is before them and what is behind them in heaven and on earth? We could, if We pleased, cause the earth to swallow them up, or cause a piece of the sky to fall upon them. In that certainly there is a sign for every servant of Ours who turns to us. (35: 7-9)

The people of Makkah held the Prophet and his Companions in contempt, and used to mock them. They did so due to their disbelief in the Hereafter and because in their hearts they were not fearful of God's scourge; this made them quite flippant about the affairs of the Hereafter.

The worst punishment for a man in this world is to be incapable of right thinking. One so punished is not capable of seeing things in their proper perspective. He is unable to learn lessons even from obvious realities. For example, innumerable stones of varying sizes fall towards the earth's surface but get destroyed as soon as they come in contact with our atmosphere. If these stones were to start falling on human habitation, the entire humanity would be wiped out. A major part of the centre of the earth consists of hot molten lava. If that lava were to erupt and flow unchecked over the surface of the earth, everything in its path would be burnt to a cinder. But God, having made special arrangements, does not allow such catastrophic events to occur. There are clear signs in heaven and on earth which show man's helplessness. But when a man is incapable of right thinking, no sign of God can give him guidance. □

ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

Time and again I have come across people who have promised something and not kept their word. What is the Islamic perspective about promises?

In mutual dealings in social life, it often happens that a person gives his word to another. There is apparently no third person or group between the two, yet there is always a third present and that is God who is the supreme witness. That is why every promise becomes a divine promise.

A believer therefore should be extremely sensitive about giving his word. His conviction is that every commitment made between two persons is under the watchful eyes of God, and that he will be accountable for its fulfilment in the court of God. This compels him to be highly responsible as regards his promises. Whenever he gives his word to anyone he makes a point of keeping it.

Many other virtues come in the wake of the regular fulfilment of promises. One of these is mutual trust. In a society where mutual trust exists, there is no discord and dissension between the people; there is an atmosphere of confidence and peaceability as there is no fear of promises being broken. Readiness to fulfil promises is a commendable trait; it is true faith that makes man the possessor of this highest human virtues.

I have heard that Islam gives a sort of daily program to its adherents to follow. Can you elaborate on this?

Islam gives a programme for life covering the individual's entire existence. From morning till evening not a single moment of the believer's life excludes the sphere of Islam. It is only after saying his prayers that he goes to bed at night and when he wakes up early in the morning, he first of all purifies his body, performs his dawn prayers. The day begins with purity and worship which is the beginning of a God oriented life. The ensuing hours between morning and noon are meant for economic activities. However during this period too a believer remembers God constantly. In all matters he adheres strictly to the limits set by God, and in his dealings with people, he is scrupulously honest in all kinds of interactions.

Then between noon to night there are 4 more prayers which keep reminding him that God's help and guidance is there for him to face his day-to-day challenges. The rest of the day he does all kinds of activities

connected to his work or studies daily chores, meals, rest etc. Like I mentioned in all his actions he tries to conduct himself in a way which will be acceptable to God. He will be duty-conscious more than rights-conscious. He will be a man of principle, a predictable character and he will make the best use of all the resources of time, energy and money to benefit himself and the society.

To sum up, the day is divided into 5 parts which is based on the time between one prayer to another and there is guidance in the Quran and teachings and life of the Prophet of how to plan efficiently the activities for working towards success based on the role of each person in this world.

Once while waiting in a lounge during travel I observed a Muslim praying in a corner. Many of the actions he was performing I could understand the meaning but towards the end he turned his face to the right and to the left what does this stand for?

As per your observation the kneeling and prostrating and standing in a humble posture before God is the physical expression of the idea that the only course that befits him is to lead his life as a submissive servant of God. The prayers is concluded by turning the face first to the right side, then to the left, and reciting the words *Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullah* (Peace and blessings of God be upon you). This is a demonstration of the fact that, spiritually conditioned by prayer, the devotees are now entering into the world with no other thoughts and feelings in their minds but those of mercy towards people all around them and peace for all humankind. Prayer turns their resolve to remain peaceful members of society, and to harbour no ill feelings towards anyone.

Prayer in one respect is the worship of God and in yet another respect, it prepares the individual to lead a worthy life among people, adopting an attitude of modesty, sympathy and goodwill in all his dealings. It perfects man's relation with God as well as with other human beings. □



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RE-ENGINEERING MINDS TOWARDS PEACE

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN PEACE FOUNDATION was established under the aegis of CPS International, New Delhi on 2nd April 2016. The foundation carries forward the peace activism of CPS. It re-engineers minds towards a culture of peace, by conducting peaceful interfaith dialogue for peace-making. It aims to counter extremism by providing a network for peace globally.

Peace Foundation's Aims and Objectives

- To re-engineer minds towards peace
- To disseminate the ideology of peace
 - To train Ambassadors of peace
 - To develop and disseminate peace material
 - To counter extremism
- To train people in peaceful interfaith dialogue for peace-making
 - To train people in conflict resolution
 - To develop and disseminate translations of the Quran
- To disseminate peace literature free or at subsidized rates
- To use media—television, radio, internet, social networking etc. effectively for educating for peace
 - To run offline and online courses for lifelong learning
 - To undertake academic researches on peace
 - To set up peace counters globally
 - To network for global peace and unity

THE WAY TO PEACE

CPS explains in all its activities that the practical way is to establish peace for its own sake, without linking it to justice and other conditions. As such, peace is not desirable for the sake of justice. It is desirable to establish normalcy. When normalcy is established it opens doors to opportunities, the peaceful availing of which leads to development, obtaining justice and all other constructive initiatives. The formula for peace and development being:

Ignore the problems and avail the opportunities. □

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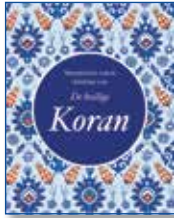
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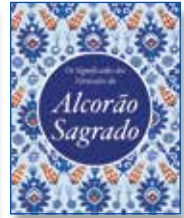
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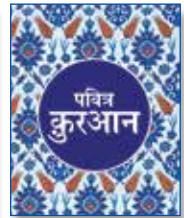
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