



PARADISE

Living in God's Neighbourhood

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



PARADISE

Living in God's Neighbourhood

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Translated by:
Prof. Farida Khanam

First Published 2022

This book is an English translation of a chapter of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's Urdu book entitled *Kitab-e-Marifat*.

This book is copyright free and royalty free. It can be translated, reprinted, stored or used on any digital platform without prior permission from the author or the publisher. It can be used for commercial or non-profit purposes. However, kindly do inform us about your publication and send us a sample copy of the printed material or link of the digital work.

e-mail: info@goodwordbooks.com

CPS International

Centre for Peace and Spirituality International

1, Nizamuddin West Market, New Delhi-110013, India

e-mail: info@cpsglobal.org

www.cpsglobal.org

Goodword Books

A-21, Sector 4, Noida-201301

Delhi NCR, India

e-mail: info@goodwordbooks.com

www.goodwordbooks.com

Center for Peace and Spirituality USA

2665 Byberry Road, Bensalem, PA 19020, USA

e-mail: kkaleemuddin@gmail.com

Printed in India

Contents

FOREWORD	5	The Seeker of Hereafter	43
God's Neighbourhood	9	The Price of Paradise	44
A Similar World	10	The Desire for Paradise	46
Introduction to Paradise	12	Man and Paradise	48
Deserving Paradise	14	Paradise and Hell	49
The World of Paradise	16	The Price of Paradise	52
Paradise Made Known	17	Seeker of Paradise	53
At the Seat of Truth	19	Modesty: The Price of Paradise	55
The World and the Hereafter	20	Value of Paradise	57
Introduction to Paradise	22	The Condition of Finding an Entry into Paradise	59
The Wisdom of Creation	24	Paradise: An Ideology of Life	61
The Principle of Pairs	25	The World of Paradise	62
Become a Seeker of Paradise	27	Paradise for Whom?	64
Paradise: A Known World	28	The Value of Paradise	69
The Paradise of this World, the Paradise of the Hereafter	30	The Greatest Problem	71
The Purpose of Creation	32	No Recommendation, Only Merit	72
Heavenly Personality	35	The Building of a Personality	74
Two Groups of People of Paradise	36	Cultural Introduction of Paradise	76
The Paradisiacal Personality	38	The Realization, the Paradise	78
The Greatest Happiness	40	Paradise: A Gift of God	80
The Craving for Paradise, the Fear of Hell	41	Paradise and Man	81

In the Gardens of Paradise	83	An Exceptional Case	103
The Award of Paradise	85	This World and the Hereafter	105
What is Paradise?	86	Deprived of Meeting With Each Other	107
Imperfect Paradise, Perfect Paradise	88	The Search for Paradise	108
The Inheritance of the Earth	90	Noise, Noise, and Noise	110
A Contradiction in Nature	92	The Cause of Dissatisfaction	112
The Greater Empire	94	Who Deserves Paradise? Divine Civilization	113 116
The Difference Between this World and the Hereafter	96	The Life of Paradise	118
Paradise: Material or Spiritual?	98	A Ticket to Paradise	121
The Concept of Paradise	100	The Wish List	123
The Feeling of Eternity	101	THE FIFTEEN BILLION YEAR PLANNING	125

FOREWORD

Paradise is another name for eternal life in the neighbourhood of God (66:11). In the world before death man lives in the neighbourhood of God at the level of mind and feeling. After death his living in the world of God will be a reality.

Man is regarded as a pleasure seeking animal. Pleasure is a unique phenomenon experienced only by human beings. The desire in humans for all kinds of pleasures is limitless. But in the present world these desires of men and women are not fulfilled. Almost without exception every one of us leaves the world without having attained total fulfilment, be he rich or poor, illiterate or educated, a commoner or a king.

There is a long list of pleasures man wants to enjoy: intellectual pleasure, the pleasure of sight, of hearing, of taste, of touch, of speech, of companionship, of

study, of discovery, of happiness, etc. The pleasure taken in all these things by man is limitless. But man is not able to have these limitless pleasures in the present world. He is in search of this, but very soon his time to leave the world approaches. Man does have the experience of the feeling of pleasure but is not able to experience it to the full. This world only gives him an introduction to eternal Paradise. The limitless pleasure that man is in search of lies in the eternal world of Paradise in the Hereafter.

The good fortune of finding a place in God's neighbourhood in the eternal life of the Hereafter will be based totally on merit. God's neighbourhood is like a universal garden. In this universal garden, only those will find a place who measure up to the divine criterion. Anything short of this will not be sufficient to guarantee a place in this universal garden.

Who will be eligible for entry into God's Paradise? God will allow only those people to live in His neighbourhood, who adhere to divine ethics at two levels: one stands in relation to man versus man, another stands in relation to man versus God. These two codes of ethics are different in their dimensions. In relation to man moral behaviour is, in fact, social behaviour which is subject to social ethics. Adherence

to the social moral code causes man to lead a harmless life in society. When people see that he is good to others, they regard him as a good member of society. But, no one can be held deserving of entering into Paradise just by adhering to social ethics. To be deserving of entry into the neighbourhood of God man has to live up to the other moral code related to God. This is realization of God. When an individual discovers his Creator, this transforms his mind. His divine nature is awakened and, as a result, all those qualities are produced which measure up to the standard of elevated human ethics.

Divine ethics is in fact, a phenomenon which comes into being after the realization of God. God being the Creator, loves His servants. Therefore, man also begins to love other human beings. The belief that God is the judge on the Day of Judgement, produces in man a strong sense of accountability. He refrains from using such words and doing such deeds as will cause God to hold him to task, and award him a severe punishment. The thinking of such a person is that the Giver is God as well as the Taker—one who can take away what He has given. This feeling puts a complete end to human arrogance. Regarding someone as being less or inferior, becomes an attitude which he cannot afford.

Where the social code of ethics permits certain freedom, the divine code of ethics—the result of the believer having established a relationship of servitude to God—sets boundaries. In short—the former code of ethics is worldly, whereas the latter is heavenly ethics. Social ethics is narrower in purview, unlike divine ethics which embraces everything.

Everything has a price and the price of Paradise is the realization of God. Nothing less than that can open the gates of Paradise. The truth is that if anything less than realization of God is regarded as the price of Paradise that constitutes belittling of Paradise.

Those selected for Paradise are the ones who have made God their supreme concern in the life of this world. Their thinking and feelings have all been devoted to God. Their mornings as well as their evenings have been filled with the remembrance of God. These are the fortunate souls who will be selected to live in the neighbourhood of God for all eternity.

Wahiduddin Khan

August 6, 2020

New Delhi, India

GOD'S NEIGHBOURHOOD

Paradise, God's neighbourhood is like a universal garden where only those will find a place in the Hereafter who have made God their supreme concern in the life of this world.

What is Paradise? Paradise is another name for eternal life in the neighbourhood of God (66:11). In the world before death man lives in the neighbourhood of God at the level of mind and feeling. After death his living in the world of God will be a reality.

God, without doubt, is the source of all virtues. That is why man can find true peace only in the neighbourhood of God. Anything short of that cannot become a source of real peace for him.

The present world, in actual fact, is a selection ground for the right kind of people. Here those people are being selected who in respect to their virtues or character are worthy of being lodged in the neighbourhood of God. Their thinking, activities, feelings, behaviour and dealings must all pass the ethical criterion which is required to become God's neighbour. It is only people such as these who will be selected for this honour. This selection will be based on the records kept by the angels of man's deeds.

The good fortune of finding a place in God's neighbourhood in the eternal life of the Hereafter will be based totally on merit. God's neighbourhood is like a universal garden. In this universal garden, only those will find a place who measure up to the divine criterion. Anything short of this will not be sufficient to guarantee a place in this universal garden.

Those selected for Paradise are the ones who have made God their supreme concern in the life of this world. Their thinking and feelings have all been devoted to God. Their mornings as well as their evenings have been filled with the remembrance of God. These are the fortunate souls who will be selected to live in the neighbourhood of God.

A SIMILAR WORLD

God created two similar worlds: one, the present world for trial, and the other, future world of Paradise for reward or punishment. If man strives for Paradise in this world, with God's mercy he will gain entry into Paradise in the next eternal phase of life.

We learn about the believers from the Quran that "whenever they are given fruits to eat (in Paradise) they will say, 'This is what we were provided

with before,' because they were given similar things.”
(2:25)

The truth is that God created two worlds similar to one another: one, the present world, and the other, the world of Paradise. The present world is the world of trial and the future world is the world of reward. The present world is an imperfect world, while the world hereafter (paradise) is a perfect world. This world is far from ideal, whereas the next world will be ideal. This world is ephemeral, whereas the next world is eternal. In the present world, man repeatedly undergoes the experience that here he has, apparently everything he desires, yet for man those very things are not attainable. Man wants a healthy life, but illness, accidents and old age negate all his desires. Man wants pleasure, but, despite all his efforts, when he finds all the objects of pleasure, it dawns upon him that he cannot enjoy them. Man wants a life laden with happiness but, when he has entered the garden of happiness of this world, he discovers that here the garden of happiness is full of thorns.

This is because, here, man is introduced to Paradise from a distance. Here man is certainly shown only a glimpse of heaven, but along with that he is told (albeit in silent words) that you cannot achieve Paradise in this world. What is required of man in this world is to

strive for Paradise here and to achieve Paradise in the next phase of life.

Alongside this, he is given an initial glimpse to show that if he comes up to the mark in his deeds, he will, as a result, be awarded the world of Paradise. Thus, the present world is the place of introduction to Paradise, while the next world is the place of attaining paradise.

INTRODUCTION TO PARADISE

Thinking deeply about Paradise and the creation plan of God one will discover that this world has been created as an introduction to Paradise. It is only in the Paradise of the Hereafter that one will find all resources of comfort and luxury in the ideal form.

In chapter 21 of the Quran it is stated: “Had We wished to find a pastime, We should surely have found it in that which is with Us, if such had been Our will” (21:17).

According to this verse, Paradise is something unknown in this world. But another verse of the Quran says: “He will admit them into the Garden He has already made known to them” (47:6).

From the second verse of the Quran, it appears that Paradise is made known to the believers in this world itself. In such a situation, how can we reconcile the two apparently opposite statements?

The truth is that in the first verse the practical finding of Paradise is indicated while, in the second verse, the intellectual finding of Paradise is referred to. Paradise without doubt, in its full sense, can be known only in the Hereafter. In the present world, man can know Paradise in terms of potential, and in the Hereafter he will find it in terms of actuality.

Those who think deeply about Paradise, those who reflect deeply upon the creation plan of God and those who are engrossed in thinking about the wisdom of this world as well as the Hereafter will find the reflection of Paradise in this world itself. They will discover the reality that this world has been created in such a way as to become an introduction to Paradise.

The Paradise of the Hereafter is perfect, while the present world is an imperfect version of Paradise. In the Paradise of the Hereafter, man will find all the resources or means of comfort and luxury in its ideal form. This experience of comforts and luxury he can have in this world in a less than ideal sense with

the difference that the Paradise of the Hereafter is eternal, while the present world is only a temporary and a partial introduction to Paradise.

DESERVING PARADISE

Gratefulness is at the core of all forms of worship. The acknowledgement of worldly blessings can make one deserving of the blessings of Paradise in the Hereafter.

Chapter 14 of the Quran has this to say: “If you are grateful, I will surely bestow more favours on you” (14:7). That is, if you are truly grateful to God for the blessings He has bestowed upon you in this world, God will give you His blessings in Paradise.

A true feeling of gratefulness is the greatest of actions. Gratefulness is at the core of all forms of worship. One who proves to be grateful in the real sense in this life will be granted divine blessings once again in the Hereafter. It is true gratitude which makes one deserving of Paradise. Only noble souls which are imbued with feelings of praise and gratefulness can enter heaven. These noble souls will be lodged in the gardens of Paradise.

The Quran tells us that after the people of Paradise are ushered into Paradise, they will say: "Praise be to God who has taken away all sorrow from us" (35:34).

In this worldly life everyone passes through the stages of sorrow. Then a time comes when he is free from sorrow. So one who on such occasions, when he is relieved from sorrow, exclaims: "O God, you have freed me from sorrow in this world, similarly I pray to You to relieve me from sorrow in the Hereafter." One who can utter these words with true feeling, may, God willing, earn oneself a ticket to paradise. The acknowledgement of worldly blessings can make one deserving of the blessings of the Hereafter.

Such words are not to be lightly uttered. For this, a deeper consciousness is required. One who awakens in himself this kind of consciousness has the ability to utter such sincere words as will make him deserving of Paradise. Without a deep awakening of this consciousness, no one can be granted this blessing.

THE WORLD OF PARADISE

In the present world man has been given things commensurate with his needs. In the world of Paradise in the Hereafter, man will be given things according to his desires.

Chapter 14 of the Quran has this to say: “He has given you all that you asked of Him.” (14:34) This relates to the present world. But what is said about Paradise has a different connotation: “Therein you shall have all that your souls desire.” (41:31) When we think about these two verses, we learn that in the present world man has been given things commensurate with his needs. But so far as Paradise is concerned, man will be given things according to his desires.

Man is regarded as a pleasure seeking animal. Pleasure is a unique phenomenon experienced only by human beings. The desire in humans for all kinds of pleasures is limitless. But in the present world these desires of men and women are not fulfilled. Almost without exception every one of us leaves the world without having attained total fulfilment, be he rich or poor, illiterate or educated, a commoner or a king.

There is a long list of pleasures man wants to enjoy:

intellectual pleasure, the pleasure of sight, of hearing, of taste, of touch, of speech, of companionship, of study, of discovery, of happiness, etc. The pleasure taken in all these things by man is limitless. But man is not able to have these limitless pleasures in the present world. He is in search of this, but very soon his time to leave the world approaches. Man does have the experience of the feeling of pleasure but is not able to experience it to the full.

An atheist philosopher holding that Paradise is a matter of wishful thinking, writes that Paradise is a beautiful idealization of human wishes. But the more appropriate thing to say would be that Paradise is a beautiful actualization of human wishes.

PARADISE MADE KNOWN

Paradise is for those realized souls for whom there have been adumbrations of Paradise in the present world. Everything in this world will serve as an introduction to Paradise.

In chapter 47, the Quran tells us about the people of Paradise: “He will admit them into the Garden He has already made known to them.” (47:6) This verse

means that, Paradise is for those realized souls for whom there have been adumbrations of Paradise in the present world.

We learn from the Quran that in the present world the earth, in reality, is like Paradise. The things which are found in an ideal form in Paradise are present in this world in an imperfect form (2:25). One whose faith is at the level of realization will become so sensitive in this matter that, in all the things of this world, he will find the reflection of Paradise. Everything in this world will serve as an introduction to Paradise.

The Quran says when the people of Paradise are given anything in Heaven they will exclaim "This is what we were provided with before" (2:25). There is also a Hadith which states that the intensity of heat in this world is because of the blowing of heat from hell. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 536)

When we reflect upon things in the light of this verse and this Hadith, we learn that the present world has been created in such a way as to become a reminder of Heaven and Hell for man. When man receives any blessings in this world, he will find therein a reflection of Paradise. And when he is beset by suffering, he is reminded of Hell. Those who live in this world will thus go in fear of Hell while longing for Paradise.

AT THE SEAT OF TRUTH

The seat of Truth in the Hereafter is reserved for those who in the present world attach the greatest of importance to truth and honesty, not to self-interest and appearances.

Chapter 54 of the Quran has this to say about the people of Paradise: “They will be at the seat of truth with an all-powerful sovereign.” (54:55)

From the study of this verse of the Quran, we learn the difference between this world and the Hereafter. In this world those people find an honourable place who are at the seat of falsehood. In the Hereafter the position will be totally opposite. There the place of honour will be given to those who stood at the seat of truth in the life of this world.

Who are these people who stand at the seat of falsehood? They are the people who go by appearances, who are selfish, who are opportunists, who are exploiters, who seek material gain by pleasing people, who ignore tomorrow and live for the interest of today, etc. These people are seen sitting at the seat of honour today in this world, but in the Hereafter, in the real world, they will find a place at the seat of falsehood.

As compared to this, the opposite kind of people are

those who in the present world attach the greatest of importance to truth and honesty. They lead a life of truth rather than of selfish interest.

They go by the criterion of principle rather than lead an unprincipled life. These are the people who will find places of honour in the Hereafter, even if they are regarded as unimportant in this world.

THE WORLD AND THE HEREAFTER

The good things of this world for man are his achieving God-realization by unconditionally making the Prophet his guide. The good things in the Hereafter is that God gives him a share in the rewards of the Hereafter.

The Quran gives us this prayer: “Our Lord, grant us good in this world as well as good in the world to come, and protect us from the torment of the Fire.” (2:201)

There are some who think that this means to ask God to grant the benefits of both the worlds, that is, enough wealth in this world and Paradise in the Hereafter. With this in mind, a certain Muslim journalist brought out

a monthly magazine titled, ‘Falaah Deen-O-Duniya’ (the good of both the worlds). But this is not what is meant by the Quranic prayer. The “good” thing means what is good in the eyes of God, rather than something of value in the eyes of men. In this respect, the “good” things would mean the blessing of good actions in this world and entry into Paradise in the Hereafter.

The good things of this world for a man are his achieving realization of God, having the ability to understand the correct meaning of religion, unconditionally making the Prophet his guide and wholeheartedly accepting the ideal religious example set by the lives of the Companions. Other good things are that God will save him from all kinds of intellectual evils, he will not misinterpret religion, being graced with the right understanding of religion and the determination to follow it. In this way, he will be saved from all deviation. No personal interest, no personal desires and no other inclination will divert him from the true path of religion. He will not become arrogant or insolent, nor will he do anything wrong in the name of religion.

The good things in the Hereafter will be that God will give us a share in the rewards of the Hereafter. In the Hereafter, a world is going to be built in the form of

Paradise, which will be ideal to the ultimate extent. There man will live in the shade of God's mercy and blessing and will have a meaningful life for all eternity, filled with significance, happiness and comfort in the full sense. This heavenly life is the supreme destination for human beings. This prayer means "Oh God, grant me the life in this world of Your choice which will make me deserving of Paradise in the Hereafter."

INTRODUCTION TO PARADISE

Those true seekers of Paradise who achieve realization of Paradise in its imperfect form in this world itself will be given an honourable entry into Paradise in the Hereafter as a reward.

Chapter 47 of the Quran speaks thus about the people of Paradise: "God will admit them into the Paradise He has already made known to them."
(47:6)

Those believers who become true seekers of Paradise achieve realization of Paradise in this world itself. They are able to see this present world in the form of an imperfect Paradise. This feeling is the proof that they

have become true seekers of Paradise. Such people will be given an honourable entry into Paradise in the Hereafter as a reward.

The truth is that the present world is a partial introduction to Paradise, and the world Hereafter is the place where one can find Paradise in the perfect sense. Those who develop their thinking in the spiritual sense are able to see the reflection of Paradise in everything. In this way, everything they have received in this world becomes an initial introduction to the Paradise of the Hereafter.

Everything of the present world is a reward given by God to man. When man develops or purifies his personality, his angle of vision changes. He develops a spiritual way of thinking. He then has the ability to see everything in its reality. Those who think in this way are the realized souls who will be held deserving of entry into Paradise.

This kind of insight into realization is born in only those who have purified themselves in the true sense. Without self-purification developing this ability is just not possible.

THE WISDOM OF CREATION

God created man with heavenly qualities, but placed him in this present non-heavenly world for a trial. Those who mould their lives on heavenly lines in this world will be lodged in the eternal Paradise of the Hereafter, where they will find every kind of fulfilment.

Chapter 95 of the Quran speaks of the creation of man and his final destiny.

“We have indeed created man in the best of mould, then We cast him down as the lowest of the low, except for those who believe and do good deeds—their shall be an unending reward.” (95:4-6)

‘The best of mould’ in this verse means a heavenly mould and the lowest of the low means the non-heavenly world. Faith indicates that man should discover this reality of creation. ‘Good deeds’ here means actions in accordance with this discovery. ‘Unending reward’ refers to the ideal world of Paradise for which man has been created.

According to this interpretation, these verses of the Quran mean that God created man with heavenly qualities. God gave man elevated tastes in every respect, the fulfilment of which is possible in Paradise.

But God placed man in this present non-heavenly world. In this world, apparently, everything is there for the taking, but all this is only in accordance with need, rather than with desire. Now man has to discover the wisdom of this creation.

This discovery should be so profound that man's whole life should be moulded accordingly. Those who have moulded their lives in this way are the ones who will be lodged in the eternal Paradise of the Hereafter, where they will find every kind of fulfilment. They will remain there for all eternity. The world of Paradise will be a perfect world in every respect. It will be totally free from fear and sorrow (7:49). This is the eternal future of man. Many prophets over the ages have come to give man these tidings.

THE PRINCIPLE OF PAIRS

All the desires and pleasures man has inherent in his nature have their pairs in eternal Paradise. Man will fulfil all his natural desires in the most superior form in Paradise.

Chapter 51 of the Quran states: "We created pairs of all things so that you might reflect." (51:49)

The concept of pairs relates not just to male and female, but to everything. For instance, God has created man as a desire-seeking creature. That is why man has all kinds of unlimited desires. But in the present world there is no way of fulfilling these desires. There are neither the means nor the resources to do so. That is, there is the seeker, but what is sought is not present in this world. The pair of the seeker is what is sought. When the whole world has been created in the form of pairs, the question arises, as to where is the pair of these natural desires? When this principle of pairing is in force throughout the whole world, it must be that there is the pair of desires as well. This pair without doubt exists and Paradise is the name of what makes up this pair.

All the desires and pleasures have their pairs in Paradise. A way of fulfilling all natural desires will be found in the most ideal way or have already been provided in the most superior form in Paradise.

This reality gives man a point of reference to pray to God. He may say: "O God, when You have created all kinds of desires in my nature, You should also grant their fulfilment."

BECOME A SEEKER OF PARADISE

In his worldly sojourn, man has to become a seeker of Paradise. One who lives in this world as a true seeker of Paradise, will be selected by God to be lodged in eternal Paradise.

The Quran tells us that God has created man in the best of moulds (95:4). One aspect of this is that man is exceptional in that he has a sense of pleasure. In this vast universe there are many forms of God's creation such as the stars, the planets, the sun, the moon, the trees, the animals, etc. but none of these are blessed with a sense of pleasure.

On the one hand, God has given man a unique sense of pleasure and on the other hand He has created a unique world called Paradise.

Paradise is the place where all the objects of pleasure exist to perfection. Man is born capable of experiencing pleasure, but he does not find those objects of pleasure in this world which could become a source of fulfilment of that pleasure for him.

In his worldly sojourn, therefore, man has to become a seeker of Paradise. For one who lives in this present world as a true seeker of Paradise, is one who will be selected by God to be lodged in eternal Paradise.

Those who fail to become seekers of Paradise in their present lives and whose hearts are set on things other than Paradise are not held desirable by God. These are the people who have set no value upon the blessings of God in this world. Their case is one of showing disrespect rather than showing respect.

Such people will be unworthy of being lodged in the gardens of Paradise. They will not receive the blessing of sharing in the heavenly provision of Paradise. They ignored God's Paradise in the present world. Now God will ignore them in the Hereafter. In the world Hereafter they will be subjected to eternal deprivation.

PARADISE A KNOWN WORLD

As compared to the perfect eternal Paradise of the Hereafter, the present planet Earth is like an imperfect paradise that gives an advance introduction to the existence of Paradise.

In chapter 47 the Quran mentions Paradise and the people of Paradise thus: "He will admit them into the Garden He has already made known to them." (47:6)

This indicates that, Paradise is a place which an aware man can realize in advance in this present world itself.

There are two levels of the realization of Paradise in this world. On the first level man has unlimited desires by birth. Along with this he feels that these desires cannot be fulfilled in this world.

Looked at rationally, when desires exist in reality, their fulfilment should be achievable. In this way, the knowledge of one's desires is in a sense half of the knowledge of Paradise.

This 'half knowledge' of Paradise, compels man to believe that the 'other half' should also be available in the system of nature. If the creation of desire is possible, then undoubtedly the fulfilment of desire should also be a possibility.

Another kind of realization or knowledge of Paradise is that which comes to him in the form of the planet earth. On the planet earth, all kinds of heavenly provisions are available. Earth is like a partial model of Paradise. As compared to a perfect Paradise, the present planet Earth is like an imperfect paradise. In this way, in a partial sense, this Earth is an advance introduction to the existence of Paradise.

THE PARADISE OF THIS WORLD, THE PARADISE OF THE HEREAFTER

The present world is a testing ground and the Hereafter is the home of reward. Discovering the present as an introduction to Paradise makes one deserving of eternal Paradise.

According to the Quran, the present world is exactly similar to the world Hereafter. (2:25) All those things which will be present in the Paradise of the Hereafter are all present in the Paradise of this world. The only difference is that in the Paradise of the Hereafter, everything will be perfect, while in the Paradise of this world, everything is in a state of imperfection. That is why the Quran says that man has been granted everything in this world according to need (14:34), whereas in the Paradise of the Hereafter, all things will be granted to man according to his desires. (41:31).

The Hereafter is the home of reward, while the present world is a testing ground. Due to the exigencies of putting man to the test, the present world is a world of toil and struggle (90:4), and is, thus, full of problems. In other words, the Paradise of

the Hereafter is a flower without thorns. By contrast, the Paradise of this world is a flower with thorns. The trial of man in this world is to take the flowers and avoid the thorns. Avoidance of thorns is the real test in this world.

One who takes the flowers and pays no attention to the thorns, has passed the test. He will lead his life in this world with feelings of thanksgiving. This is, in actual fact, what is desired by the Lord. On the contrary, one who fails to ignore the presence of thorns will always live a life of complaint. He will remain deprived of the worship of thanksgiving in this world and will, as a result, be deprived from entering into Paradise in the Hereafter. Discovering the present as being Paradise in actual fact makes one deserving of the Paradise of the Hereafter. But man is full of hatred and constantly complaining because of the presence of “thorns”. But you must remember that the thorns of the present world are to be avoided and not to be protested about. Those who do not understand this will experience only deprivation. They will have no success.

THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

In the present world, man has to endure grief (35:34) and labour hard (90:4); whereas all the activities of Paradise will be of a joyful nature (36:55).

The fifty-sixth verse of chapter 51 of the Quran explains the purpose of man's creation as follows: "I created the jinn and mankind only so that they might worship Me." (51:56) In this verse, worship means realization of God. That is, man was created so that he might achieve the realization (*maarifah*) of his Creator. How will he arrive at this realization? To this end, God gave man such a mind as has the unlimited capacity to think.

Vis-à-vis this capacity, man was placed in a world which is a manifestation of God's attributes. There is food for God realization in everything in this universe. Man, under the guidance of the Prophet, can attain realization of God by pondering upon God's creation. But history tells us that it has not been possible to fulfil this purpose of creation. Unfortunately, man leaves this world without properly utilizing his mind, yet the Quran tells us that God's signs are so numerous that, even if all the trees could become pens and all the seas, or even the double of all the seas, could become ink,

the signs of God could not be enumerated (31:27). These signs are, in fact, signs of realization. In this way, we find that the signs of God have yet to be written, that is, have yet to be discovered.

Why is this so? We find the answer to this in the Creation Plan of God. According to God's Creation Plan, human life is divided into two stages. The temporary period that is, man's stay in this present world, and the permanent period, or man's stay in the Hereafter. Just as man has failed to utilize the potential of the human mind, the signs of the marvels of God, scattered throughout the whole universe, still remain undiscovered.

When we reflect upon this, we learn that the present world is the beginning of human existence, while the world of the Hereafter is its completion. In the present world, those individuals are being recruited who have the ability to complete this process in the Hereafter. In the Hereafter, the unworthy will be separated from the worthy and will be thrown into the universal dustbin, while those who have proved their ability to live their lives in the right way will be selected for entry into Paradise.

We can express this differently: The world before The Day of Judgement (*Qiyamat*) is the world of

incomplete human civilization; whereas after the Day of Judgement will come the world of perfect, divine civilization. Apparently the age of human civilization has reached its final limit. Very soon the time is going to come when the stage of divine civilization will begin. And this will last forever.

Just as the present civilization was developed by certain human beings, the divine civilization will also be developed by certain fortunate people, who will be aided by the angels. The process of developing the civilization of the present world was carried out by strenuous effort, as is referred to in the Quran in chapter 90, verse 4. But the process of divine civilization, on the contrary, will be a joyful activity (See chapter 36, verse 55). On the subject of Paradise the Quran states that there man will be given similar things (2:25). This does not just mean that the fruits of Paradise will be similar to the fruits of this world. The truth is that it covers the whole of human life. It means that just as man leads a life full of activity in this world, he will lead a life full of activity in Paradise. The difference is that, in the present world, all activities are performed in a less than ideal environment, while in Paradise these activities will be performed in an ideal environment. In the present world, man has to endure

grief (35:34) and must labour hard (90:4); whereas all the activities of Paradise will be of a joyful nature.

HEAVENLY PERSONALITY

A heavenly personality is free from all kinds of negative feelings: he is free from hatred, revenge, anger and does good turns, only as a duty without any hope of recompense.

Abu Hurayrah, a Companion of the Prophet, narrated a tradition of the Prophet in these words: “Such people will go to Paradise whose hearts are like the hearts of birds.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2840)

The bird may be an animal, but it has an exceptional quality which is not found in any other animal and, that is that the bird is free of all feelings of hatred and revenge. All other animals possess the instinct of defensive attack. But the bird is totally free of this. Look at the bird. You will find it to be innocence incarnate. That is why the pigeon is held to be a symbol of peace. According to this hadith, it is this quality which is required of one who is a seeker of Paradise.

The Hadith shows that a heavenly person is one who is free from all kinds of negative feelings. While the bird possesses positive qualities as a matter of instinct, the

heavenly person acquires these positive qualities by the exercise of free will.

A heavenly man is one who trains himself in such a way that his heart is free from hatred, revenge and every other such negative influence. He refrains from anger, he does not react negatively, he does good turns without any hope of recompense. He lives with others as if they were sisters and brothers, he shuns the company of Satan and makes the Angels his companions. He fulfils the rights of others and asks for his rights only from God (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 7052). Such are the superior qualities which will entitle one to gain entry into Paradise.

TWO GROUPS OF PEOPLE OF PARADISE

Higher level of Paradise is for those who realized Truth at the level of mere arguments, while its lower level is for people who accepted Truth when it gained ascendancy.

We learn from chapter 56 of the Quran that there will be two big groups of people of Paradise, one to the fore (*Assabeqoon*), others on the right. Royal rewards await the first group, while

rewards of a general nature (56:8-40) are reserved for the second group. What would form the basis of this difference between the people of the first category and those of the second category? The Quran tells us that the reason for this lies in the difference between the people who accepted the truth before the victory (conquest of Makkah) and those who accepted it after the victory (57:10)

Those who accepted the truth before the time of the victory and extended their full support to it would be placed in a high level in Paradise. And those who accepted and supported the truth after the period of victory, would find a place on the right. This relates not only to the Prophet's time, but also to the nature of belief.

When the truth dawns in its initial stages, it is in abstract form. Its position can be likened to an ideological reality supported only by the power of arguments. In later times when the call of truth reaches the stage of victory and dominance, then the position of truth is no longer just a matter of ideology. Now everyone can see truth with one's own eyes as a solid reality.

In the first stage, truth needed to be recognized in the form of argument (*dalil*), consisting of mere words. In the second stage, there are clear events in favour of the

importance of truth. In the first stage, truth has to be recognized by argument in words, but in the second stage there are clear physical events which suffice for one to understand and accept the importance of truth. In the first stage, the acceptance of truth reduced the person to a stranger in one's own society. In the second stage association with the victorious brings laurels, honour and popularity. The former is only a loser, while the latter is the gainer. The former found a place only in the foundation while the latter found a place on the heights of the structure. It is this difference in realization that is responsible for the first degree of reward for the former group while the second degree of reward will be earned by the latter group.

THE PARADISIACAL PERSONALITY

A heavenly personality shuns the company of Satan, and seeks the company of Angels. Remaining patient, such a personality pays his dues and asks for his rights only from God.

According to a tradition narrated by Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet of Islam once said: "Such people will gain entry into Paradise whose hearts are like

the hearts of birds.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 4840)
 The bird is an animal. But the bird has an exceptional quality which is not found in any other animal and that is, the bird is free from any feelings of hatred or revenge. All other animals have the predisposition to attack in self-defence. But the bird is absolutely free from this. Look at a bird. It will look like an emblem of innocence. That is why the pigeon is held to be a symbol of peace.

According to the Hadith, it is this paradisiacal quality which is desirable for one who is a seeker of Paradise. A heavenly personality is one which is free of all kinds of negative feelings. The only difference being that the bird possesses this positive quality as a matter of instinct, while the heavenly person possesses this positive quality by conscious choice.

A heavenly person is one who trains himself in such a way that his heart is totally free of such things as hatred and revenge. He can control his anger, he does not react negatively. He returns love for hatred. He conducts himself well with others without any expectations. He lives amongst people as if they were his sisters and brothers. He shuns the company of Satan, and seeks the company of angels. He remains patient instead of complaining. He pays his dues and

asks for his rights only from God. These are the noble qualities which will make one deserving of entry into Paradise.

THE GREATEST HAPPINESS

Paradise, an eternal place where all desires will be fulfilled to perfection, will be the greatest source of happiness for those found deserving of it by God Almighty.

According to a tradition, the Prophet of Islam once said that God would thus address the inhabitants of Paradise: "O, dwellers of Paradise." And they would say in response: "At your service and pleasure, our Lord, the good is in Your hand." The Lord would then say: "Are you well pleased now?" They would reply: "Why should we not be pleased, O Lord, when You have given us what You have not given to any of Your creatures?" God would say: "May I not give you something even more excellent than that?" And He will say: "I shall guarantee you my eternal pleasure and I shall never afterwards be displeased with you." (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2829)

Paradise, a place where all desires will be fulfilled

to perfection, is without doubt a combination of all blessings. Those who enter Paradise, will feel that they have received all kinds of genuine happiness there. Yet they may have the fear that the Paradise they have received, being a gift from God,—and they not being its creators, it might be taken away by God if He so desired. This tradition is an answer to this fear. When God Himself declares that His pleasure is eternal, it will mean that Paradise will be the place of their sojourn forever. It will never be taken away from them. The knowledge of this will be, without doubt, the greatest source of happiness for the people of Paradise.

THE CRAVING FOR PARADISE, THE FEAR OF HELL

Those people who craved Paradise more than anything else, and started fearing Hell more than anything else, will be held worthy of gaining entry into eternal Paradise by God.

According to Sunan Al Tirmidhi, on behalf of one who asked for Paradise three times, Paradise will say to God, “O God, grant him Paradise.” And on behalf of one who seeks refuge from hell three times,

hell will say, “O God, grant him refuge from hell.” This tradition has been recorded in different books of Hadith. (*Sunan Al Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2572)

In this tradition, three times does not mean just three times, but rather three occasions. This does not mean that the person who speaks these words three times numerically will be held deserving of this reward. It means that it is those people who discover Paradise and Hell, with such intensity that it became a part of their thinking process, those who craved Paradise more than anything else, and started fearing Hell more than anything else, who owing to their heightened consciousness have come to think that if they failed to find Paradise, they would be ruined for all eternity: it is people such as these who would be held worthy of Paradise.

Such a person's words were put on record by the angels. He called God in his solitude to include him among those chosen servants who will be rewarded with Paradise, and who will be saved from Hell. In this way, the Angels will record his fervent prayer. According to the Hadith, this will apply to those who have been in this tumultuous state at least three times. This Hadith, in actual fact, simply describes states of being rather than mere numbers.

THE SEEKER OF HEREAFTER

The stage before death is for preparation. The stage after death is to reap the reward of one's actions. If man saves himself from desire that diverts him from the straight path, eternal success awaits him in the Hereafter.

Quoting the words of a traditionist, Al-Baihaqi, as recorded in a Hadith, Hazrat Jabir narrates that, the Prophet of Islam once observed, “What I fear most in my people (*ummah*) is their desires, ambitions and wishes, for desire comes in the way of truth and ardent wishes make man oblivious of the Hereafter. This world is a fleeting world. And the Hereafter is certain to come. There are people who are seekers of both this world and the Hereafter. Save yourself if you can from being a seeker of the world, for you are in a world today where there are actions, but no reckoning. And tomorrow you will be in the world of the Hereafter, where there will be reckoning but no actions.” (*Shu'abul Iman*, Hadith No. 10132)

We learn from this tradition of the Prophet that there are two stages of human life—the stage before death and the stage after death. The stage before death is for preparation. Preparation in the stage before death

must envisage consequences, the stage after death is that in which man will reap reward of his actions. The greatest knowledge and the greatest wisdom lie in being able to grasp this reality about human life. The basic thing about preparation for the Hereafter is that man should save himself from desire which diverts him from the straight path. In relation to this, there are two kinds of men—the seeker of the world and the seeker of the Hereafter. Foolish is the one who is the seeker of this world, while the wise one is who is the seeker of the Hereafter. Eternal failure awaits the seeker of the world, while eternal success awaits the seeker of the Hereafter.

THE PRICE OF PARADISE

When a man attains realization of God, discovers the realities of divine creation, this spontaneously brings words of acknowledgement of God to his lips. This will make him deserving of Paradise.

A certain tradition has been recorded in different books of Hadith with slight differences. Its gist is that a person may be taken out of the Hell in the Hereafter. Then he will be asked as to how he met his

fate. He will say that he had been very bad. Then he would be asked if he had possessed gold equal to the earth, would he like to pay out all that gold in order to save himself from hell fire. He will say, "Yes". Then he will be told: that in the world he was asked for much less but he did not comply with that. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6538)

In this tradition, what is meant by 'less'? It means acknowledgement. If man had been asked to give gold as the price of Paradise it would have been the material price of Paradise. But a material price of this kind is not required of man. What was asked from man was nothing but acknowledgement, but man was so engrossed with things other than God that he could not pay this price of acknowledgement.

What is acknowledgement? Acknowledgement is not a simple matter: it is always the result of discovery. When a man thinks deeply, divine realities are revealed to him. On the one hand, he attains realization of God, and on the other hand, he discovers the realities of divine creation. He becomes fully conscious of Hell and Paradise.

These discoveries produce a storm in his mind. When this consciousness and this feeling spontaneously

bring words of acknowledgement of God to his lips, it is such acknowledgement as will make him deserving of Paradise.

THE DESIRE FOR PARADISE

The desire for Paradise of the Hereafter is instilled in man by birth. But he starts building a Paradise in this world itself, where it can never be found. This for man is a real deprivation.

The Prophet of Islam once observed, “Those who should be striving to attain such a precious thing as Paradise are sleeping.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2601) This means that those who should be striving for Paradise are engaging themselves in worldly pursuits. It means that Paradise is supremely precious. Every man should, therefore, be a seeker of Paradise. But it is very strange that man is totally oblivious of it.

According to his inner urge, every individual is running after the supposed Paradise. Some search for it in their children, in their jobs, in their businesses, in their status, in their fame, in their wealth, power and position, etc. But everyone is a failure in his discovery

because Paradise, in fact, lies in the Hereafter. It is not present in this world at all.

The desire for Paradise is instilled in man by birth. It is that Paradise which man will achieve in the Hereafter. But, instead of Paradise, he becomes a seeker of things which are not Paradise. This for man is a real deprivation.

Paradise is that ideal place where people will have total fulfilment in the best sense. But it is not possible for anyone to find this Paradise in the present world. They do not try to find out where their desired Paradise is placed and are expending their total energy on trying to find Paradise where it does not exist.

This is the greatest error into which all men and women fall. Looked at from this angle, according to the Quran, the example of such people is like the person who runs after a mirage to quench his thirst. But when he reaches that place, he finds that far from being water it was nothing but an illusion. (24:39)

MAN AND PARADISE

Man will certainly enter Paradise if he saves himself from distraction. Then he will certainly discover his true divine nature, his conscience, and be held deserving of entry into Paradise.

According to a tradition recorded in books of Hadith, the Prophet once observed: “You will certainly enter Paradise, except for those who are bent on denial, and who ran away from God just as a camel runs away (when untied).” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 22226)

God has created man essentially for Paradise. According to the creation plan of God, Paradise alone is the only place for a noble soul like man. The truth is that man and Paradise are one another’s counterpart. Man is for Paradise and Paradise is for man.

The condition laid down by God for entry into Paradise is practicable to the fullest extent. The condition is that man must lead his life according to the natural state bestowed upon him by God at birth and he should reach God (after death) in that same natural state: ‘And when he alone will be saved who comes to God with a sound heart.’ (26:89)

This is the only condition for entry into Paradise:

that man must adhere to the nature he is born with as given by God. He must not deviate from this divine nature. God “inspired this (divine nature) so that he might understand what was right and wrong for it.” (91:8) If man saves himself from distraction, he will certainly discover his true nature, which is in the form of conscience within every human being.

This conscience is an internal sign of this divine nature. God’s prophets came to the world to make men aware of this nature, so that what exists within man at the unconscious level, should be discovered by him even at the conscious level. The truth is that man is for Paradise and Paradise is for man. It is only one who knowingly deviates from the path towards Paradise who is the exception to this rule.

PARADISE AND HELL

Paradise is for one who detaches himself from the innumerable pleasures of this world, and remains disinterested; whereas the Hell is for one who remains immersed in the pleasures of this world until one dies.

A long tradition has been narrated about Paradise and Hell in books of Hadith.

“When God created Paradise, He said to Gabriel: ‘Go and look at Paradise.’ Gabriel went and looked at all the blessings God had provided for man in Paradise. Then Gabriel came back and said: ‘O my Lord, by Your Honour and Might, whoever knows of Paradise will surely enter it.’ Then God covered Paradise, with all kinds of unpleasant things. Then He said to Gabriel: ‘Go and have a look at it.’ Gabriel went to see Paradise, then he came back and said: ‘O My Lord, by Your Honour and Might, I am afraid that no one will enter it.’ God created Hell, then He said: ‘Gabriel go and look at it.’ Gabriel did as he was told. Then he came back and said to God: ‘O my Lord, By Your Honour and Might, anyone who hears of it, will be so frightened that he will never enter it.’ Then God covered hell with carnal desires, then He said to Gabriel: ‘Go and have a look at hell.’ Gabriel went and looked at it, then he came back and said to God: ‘O My Lord, by Your Honour and Might, I am afraid that no one will be able to save himself from entering hell.’ (*Sunan Al-Tirmizi*, Hadith No.2560, *Sunan Abu Dawood*, Hadith No.4744)

If people were to see Paradise in its real form, everyone would become earnestly desirous of entering Paradise. If people were to see hell in its real form, everyone would flee from it. But the present world is a testing

ground. To facilitate this trial, the path of Paradise leads the way through many unpleasant experiences. In contrast to this, the path of hell is surrounded by attractive things. In other words, one has to place curbs on one's desires in order to become a deserving candidate for Paradise; whereas following one's desires without any restraint will lead one to Hell. Putting curbs on one's desires produces a purified personality which makes one a deserving candidate for Paradise. On the contrary, following one's desires unrestrainedly produces an impure personality, which is destined for hell. This is, thus, expressed in the Quran: "He who purifies it will indeed be successful, and he who corrupts it is sure to fail." (91:9-10)

To find entry into Paradise it is essential for man to keep a continuous watch over himself. He must set his course after deep thinking. On the contrary one who leads a permissive life will apparently be living a happy life in this world; but he will be fated, finally, to reach a world where he will be eternally bereft of every kind of happiness.

The Paradise of the Hereafter is for one who detaches himself from the innumerable pleasures of this world, and remains disinterested; whereas the Hell of the Hereafter is for one who remains immersed in the pleasures of this world until one dies.

THE PRICE OF PARADISE

Success in this world is possible only by taking planned action. Similarly, success in the Hereafter, finding a place in the neighbourhood of God—Paradise, will also be possible only if one undertakes *Akhirat*-oriented planning, while living in this world.

Abu Hurairah narrates that the Prophet of Islam observed: “One who is concerned, starts his journey very early in the morning while it is dark and one who starts his journey early reaches his destination. Listen, the bargain of God is Paradise.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2450)

In ancient Arabia, it was customary for travellers to begin their journey at dawn while it was still dark, so that they could reach their destination before the sun rose and it became hot. This was the traditional way of travelling in the desert, because it was always feared that travellers would be adversely effected by the hot sun and would die along with their camels.

The same is true of the seeker of Paradise. The seeker of Paradise plans with great foresight. He has to prepare himself so thoroughly for the journey to Paradise that no unexpected contingency can block his path. Nothing can make him deviate from his path

to Paradise. Nothing can cause him to digress from the right path.

A businessman makes preparations to the utmost extent to get a worldly bargain. The bargain of God—which is Paradise, is the most precious of all bargains. That is why man should plan with the greatest of care for the journey to Paradise just as he would plan for any worldly journey. He should not be negligent in any way. Paradise will be achieved on the basis of real action rather than as a result of wishful thinking.

Success in this world is possible only by taking planned action. Similarly, success in reaching the Hereafter will also be possible only by *Akhirat*-oriented planning.

SEEKER OF PARADISE

Human nature is calling out at every moment: 'O Man! Run away from Hellfire, and be a seeker of Paradise.' Successful is the one who hears this call and follows it.

In a tradition of Prophet Muhammad, he wondered that those who should be running away from hell are sleeping and those who should be striving to attain such a precious thing as Paradise are sleeping.

(*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2601) In this tradition of the Prophet of Islam, the phrases *haarib-e-naar* (running away from hell) and *taalib-e-Jannat* (seeker of Paradise) have been used. The choice of the phrases is very meaningful. It indicates the fact that man has been created in such a way, that because of his upright nature, he will run away from hell and be a seeker of Paradise. But because of the deviation of his human nature, he becomes a totally different person: he runs away from Paradise and runs towards Hell.

Man finds it difficult to tolerate suffering. Any kind of misery is the most disagreeable thing for human beings. Man wants comfort with all his heart, he is an extreme lover of happiness and pleasure. Therefore, his entire life revolves around these two things that is saving himself from miserable situations and ensuring all worldly comfort for himself. But experiences of history show that in the present world it is not possible for a person to save himself from woe and misery completely and neither is it possible for man to have comfort and happiness in the real sense. Even after striving for the whole of his life, he fails to achieve these goals.

On the one hand man has this inner craving for a life of comfort and happiness, while on the other

hand this goal is unattainable in the present world. If we examine this situation, we come to know that man's real direction was towards the Hereafter, man deviated from this course and turned towards the present world. Human nature is calling out at every moment: 'O Man! Run away from Hellfire, and be a seeker of Paradise.' Successful is the one who hears this call and follows it. The failure is the one who does not listen to this call and finally falls down into the pit of eternal regret and despair.

MODESTY

THE PRICE OF PARADISE

Realizing God's Lordship, man realizes his position of helplessness and servitude. Then one kneels down before God, saying: "O, God, Forgive me." These words of humility are the price of Paradise.

Before the advent of Prophet Muhammad there lived a man in ancient Arabia by the name of Abdullah bin-Judaan, who was a very noble and generous man. He often gave food to others and helped them.

A tradition about Abdullah-bin-Judaan has been recorded in Sahih Bukhari which is given here: "Hazrat

Ayesha says that, she said to the Prophet Muhammad: 'O Prophet', Abdullah-bin-Judaaan fed the people and honoured the guests. Will his action benefit him on the Day of Judgement?' The Prophet Muhammad replied, 'No, because he did not say even once, 'O, Lord! Forgive my sins on the Day of Judgement:''' (Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 214)

This tradition tells us what God requires from his servants. What is required is acknowledgement. When man realizes his position of servitude and God's Lordship, an intense feeling of helplessness is produced within him. Before God's greatness and perfection, his own existence appears altogether trivial. This realization compels him to kneel down before God, pleading for mercy and forgiveness, saying: "O, God, Forgive me." These are the words of humility. And such words of humility are the final price of Paradise. The man who has neither any deed to his credit nor any confession of inaction, what will be the basis of his entry into Paradise?

VALUE OF PARADISE

Paradise is the name of God's neighbourhood. Only those will find a place in Paradise who discover God while He is unseen and starts living in the vicinity of God in this world itself.

Paradise is a unique world created by God. All kinds of comfort and happiness of a high standard exist in Paradise to the fullest extent. Paradise is the place where man will gain every kind of everlasting fulfilment. (41:31)

Who will gain entry into this unique world of Paradise? This world of Paradise in the eternal life after death will be for those men and women who will pay the price for this Paradise. It is for those who become truly divine or God-oriented. Man, who is apparently, far from God becomes closer to God at the level of realization.

Paradise is the name of God's neighbourhood. Only those will be able to find entry in the neighbourhood of God who start living in the vicinity of God in the world before the Hereafter.

Man sees himself in the form of a created being, but he has to discover God in the form of a Being not created by anyone. In the present world, people believe in

things by seeing them, but they have to believe in God without seeing Him. Human beings have immense love for wealth and children but they have to start to fear God the most and love God the most, and on that basis establish a relationship with Him.

Human beings live for the things of this world and attach importance to them. But Paradise is for those who can rise above worldly things and develop supreme concern for God alone. While man's interest is focussed on his family and his people, and has a relationship with God only at the level of formal rituals, he will not find a place in Paradise. Only those will find a place in Paradise who are focused on God, and whose interests are all God-oriented. Their relationships with everything and everyone else are purely duty or need-based such as having to care for the family, etc. Essentially, they love God and God alone.

THE CONDITION OF FINDING AN ENTRY INTO PARADISE

Paradise can be attained by controlling our desires and developing our minds to withstand Satan's whispered temptations. Man should place a barricade around his every desire so that Satan may not enter through it, taking him away from God's mercy.

Adam was the first man as well as the first Prophet. God first created Adam and Eve and then placed them in Paradise and said, 'O, Adam! Live with your wife in Paradise and eat freely from it anywhere you may wish. Yet do not approach this tree lest you become wrongdoers.' (2:35)

But after coming under the influence of Satan, both Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. As a result, they were expelled from Paradise and placed in the present world. And they were told that they and the whole human race could go to Paradise only if they did good deeds and proved to be worthy of finding an entry into Paradise.

This description of the beginning of life shows what conditions must be fulfilled before gaining entry into Paradise. Paradise will be achieved neither through mysterious ways nor on the basis of any

recommendation from someone. Paradise is not a birth right, even for the prophets.

God has set this example for all mankind through Prophet Adam and explained that Paradise cannot be found by some self-styled beliefs. This principle is so all-embracing that even the prophets are no exception to it.

From the case of Prophet Adam, another very important thing that comes to light is that the first thing on the basis of which Paradise can be attained is the controlling of our desires and the developing of our minds to the point where we may be able to withstand Satan's whispered temptations. Desire for eternal success is overwhelmingly present in man. Satan assailed Adam through his desires and he succeeded. Man, too, has many desires. Every desire opens the door to the devil. Man should place a barricade around his every desire so that Satan may not enter through it and take him away from God's mercy.

PARADISE

AN IDEOLOGY OF LIFE

Man is a Paradise-seeker by nature. Everyone wants to realize the latent Paradise hidden in human nature. To remain tension-free we have to realize that Paradise is achievable only in the next world. The present world is merely to prepare ourselves for eternal Paradise.

The conviction that Paradise exists is not a belief in any simple sense. It is a full-fledged ideology. The belief in Paradise relates to man's entire life. The importance of Paradise can be properly understood only when it is linked to all of human existence.

The study of man shows that man is a Paradise-seeking animal. Man's nature craves a world which is an ideal world, where everything man has meets the highest standards of perfection. Another name for it is Paradise. And the attainment of this Paradise is a dream every man and woman has in common.

If we study the present state of man, we find that all human beings are greedy to the utmost extent for material things. Everyone wants as much wealth and power as he can have. All this is because man wants to realize the latent Paradise hidden in human nature. But there is a permanent obstacle to it. The present

world in terms of its resources is an imperfect world. And the building of paradise in such an imperfect world is not at all possible.

The contradiction between potential and actuality is the real cause of all evils in this world. It is due to this that people live permanently in a state of mental tension. It is due to this that people fall a victim to frustration and frequently go to the extreme of turning violent.

There is only one solution to this problem and that is to create awareness of the reality that Paradise is achievable only in the next world, and never in the present world. The belief in Paradise makes man a realist, and realism is the sole secret to success.

THE WORLD OF PARADISE

Paradise will be a place of enormous attraction and unlimited enjoyable activities. The greatest attraction of Paradise will be the Being of Almighty God. The whole of Paradise will be filled with the light of God: "God is the light of the heavens and the earth" (24:35).

A heavenly character is a must to gain entry into Paradise. And experience has shown that there

are very few people throughout the entire course of human history who have evinced such a character. In such a case, people often think that Paradise must be a very desolate place, rather than a place alive with people.

The greatest attraction of Paradise will be the Being of Almighty God. The Quran has this to say about God: “God is the light of the heavens and the earth” (24:35). This light will be omnipresent in Paradise. The whole of Paradise will be filled with the light of God. Every man and woman in Paradise will continually feel the presence of God. Besides this, there will be countless Angels of God in Paradise. The prophets who came to the world in the different ages of history will be there with the status of distinguished personalities. There will also be virtuous men and virtuous women who were born in human history in different eras. There will be countless young people who died in innocence in childhood. These children will be a special attraction of Paradise. Perhaps it is about them that the Quran has this to say: “They will be attended by youths who will not age—when you see them you will think them to be like sprinkled pearls”. (76:19)

In Paradise, when there will be so many attractions and so many enjoyable activities, how can such a

Paradise be a desolate place? The truth is that Paradise will be a place of enormous attraction. A tradition has it that, "Paradise has that which no eye has seen, and which no ear has heard of, neither could anyone ever have imagined what it is like." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3244)

PARADISE FOR WHOM?

Paradise is another name for God's neighbourhood. Only those people will find entry into Paradise, who realize God and adhere to divine ethics in this world. Living merely by social ethics will never make one eligible for entry into eternal Paradise.

An educated non-Muslim said, "I conduct myself well with others. I never harm anyone. I always try to live as a good member of society. Therefore, I am convinced that after death I will enter Paradise. When I am a good man, why would God send me to hell?"

I said that, good behaviour on its own would not lead one to Paradise. What is Paradise? Paradise is, in fact, another name for God's neighbourhood. God will allow only those people to live in His neighbourhood,

who adhere to divine ethics. No one can be held deserving of entering into Paradise just by adhering to social ethics.

In fact, there are two levels of ethics: one stands in relation to man versus man, another stands in relation to man versus God. These two codes of ethics are different in their dimensions. In relation to man moral behaviour is, in fact, social behaviour which is subject to social ethics. Adherence to the social moral code causes man to lead a harmless life in society. When people see that he is good to others, they regard him as a good member of society.

But the other moral code relative to God leads man to realization of God. When an individual discovers his Creator, this transforms his mind. His divine nature is awakened and, as a result, all those qualities are produced which measure up to the standard of elevated human ethics.

The human code of ethics comes into being because of social incentives. As such, once the relationship with a society no longer exists, this code of ethics does not exist either. Such a moral code serves a temporary purpose. But after the passage of time, it has no further reason to exist. On the contrary, the moral code relative to God results from an eternal

incentive. This is interconnected with the eternity of God. Therefore, one who adheres to such a code of ethics is held deserving of being granted a place in the eternal Paradise of God.

Divine ethics is in fact, a phenomenon which comes into being after the realization of God. God being the Creator, loves His servants. Therefore, man also begins to love other human beings. The belief that God is the judge on the Day of Judgement, produces in man a strong sense of accountability. He refrains from using such words and doing such deeds as will cause God to hold him to task, and award him a severe punishment. The thinking of such a person is that the giver is God as well as the Taker—one who can take away what He has given. This feeling puts a complete end to human arrogance. Regarding someone as being less or inferior, becomes an attitude which he cannot afford.

Where the social code of ethics permits certain freedoms, the divine code of ethics—the result of the believer having established a relationship of servitude to God—sets boundaries. In short—the former code of ethics is worldly, whereas the latter is heavenly ethics. Social ethics is narrower in purview, unlike divine ethics which embraces everything.

Everything has a price and the price of Paradise is the realization of God. Nothing less than that can open the gates of Paradise. The truth is that if anything less than realization of God is regarded as the price of Paradise that constitutes belittling of Paradise.

What is realization? Realization is, in fact, another name for the discovery of God. It is to see God with deep insight. It comes about in a high level of consciousness, when all worldly things lose significance and God becomes the greatest concern for man.

This realization is no simple matter. The truth is that tens of thousands of veils are cast over God realization. Those who are able to tear aside these veils of doubt, reach that high level of conviction which is called God realization. A seeker of God realization has to pass this test. Only those who pass in this test of tearing aside the veils of doubt can experience the realization of God.

The real sign of the attainment of God realization is one and only one and that is internal in nature. That is, man finds God in such a manner that He becomes his inner voice in the complete sense. Man is by birth a seeker. It is man's nature to want to discover the higher truth. God realization is the answer to this quest. When a child is looking for his mother and finally finds her, he embraces her with his entire existence. The same is

true of one who has achieved God realization. When a person achieves realization of God in the real sense, he is linked to God so completely, just as a small child is with his mother.

In the matter of God realization no excuse is acceptable. One who in this present life proves himself blind to the attainment of God realization, will remain blind in the Hereafter as well. The reason is that when the opportunities of God realization present themselves with all the arguments and signs, it becomes impossible for anyone not to recognize them. This feeling of God realization is in tune with man's instincts and, if he is serious, he will never fail to recognize it.

When a child's mother is absent for some time and then she appears, it becomes impossible for the child not to recognize his mother. In a child the remembrance of his mother is so strong that it becomes impossible for the child not to recognize her when she comes before him. Similarly, when the door to realization of God is opened with all the arguments and signs, then man cannot afford not to recognize it. The child who does not recognize his mother is without doubt blind: he is deprived of his external vision as well as his insight.

THE VALUE OF PARADISE

Only those people will inhabit Paradise who are able to develop a divine, purified personality. (20:76) A divine personality avoids negative feelings, remains positive, controls desires, adheres to justice, speaks the truth, keeps promises and lives by principles.

Paradise is a world of eternal happiness. Who are those people who will be worthy of getting entry in the standard world of the Paradise after death? They will be those people, who in their pre-death period itself have intellectually and practically made themselves capable of living up to the standard of this world called Paradise in the post-death period.

Considering anything else as the price of Paradise is an underestimation of this ideal world. For example, it is nothing but wishful thinking to believe that one will get Paradise by associating with a certain group, or by engaging in some formal ritual acts, undertaking a pilgrimage to a holy site, singing the and anthem of *naat* and *hamd* on the stage, engaging in the construction of a magnificent building in the name of religion, participating in rallies and processions, taking pride in Islam, etc. There is no connection of

Paradise to any such thing. None of such things are to lead man to Paradise.

Only those people will inhabit Paradise who are able to develop a divine personality. A divine personality has been called a purified personality in the Quran (20:76). A divine personality is a prepared personality in relation to Paradise.

The preparation of such a divine personality is possible only in this present world. Through different kinds of conditions and experiences, man develops a divine personality in himself in the present world by avoiding negative feelings and remaining positive. In spite of unfavourable conditions he remains on principles. He adheres to justice, he controls his own desires. He always speaks the truth. He keeps his promises to others. No failure makes him disappointed and no success makes him a transgressor. This is heavenly personality, and such people will be held deserving of Paradise.

THE GREATEST PROBLEM

When the realization of God reaches its ultimate limit, it manifests itself as fear of God. One who fears God becomes desirous of Paradise in its totality and along with this, he is fearful of his fate if God does not give him Paradise. This is the highest level of realization.

Human life is a continuum of consciousness. Man's existence is a living existence and coincidentally he is conscious of being a living entity. His consciousness is enhanced in having sensitivity. Man is an aware person in the perfect sense and is moreover, highly sensitive in the fullest sense. As a result of these attributes of man, whenever he has a good experience, he is very happy and whenever he has any bad experience he is very disturbed. Both these feelings of pleasure and pain are found to an extreme degree in human beings. Man has inherited these two qualities by birth. This should result in making man a very great seeker of Paradise, going greatly in fear of hell-fire. This is because after death every man is going to find a place either in eternal Paradise or in eternal hell. Paradise is eternally a place of happiness and comfort, while hell is eternally a place of sorrow and regret. In consequence of his deeds, man is inevitably going to reach one of these two destinations. This being so, every human being must

be greatly concerned about this. It is, however, very strange that man in this gravest of matters has become an example of this tradition of the Prophet, which has been thus expressed: "How strange it is that people are not desirous of a thing as precious as Paradise, and how strange it is that people are not trying to save themselves from such a horrible or fearful place as Hell." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2601)

There is nothing negative about the fear of God. The truth is that when the realization of God reaches its ultimate limit, it manifests itself as fear of God. The fearful person becomes desirous of Paradise in its totality and along with this, he is always fearful of what his fate will be if God does not give him Paradise. This is the highest level of realization.

NO RECOMMENDATION, ONLY MERIT

The present world is designed for the selection of deserving candidates for eternal Paradise. Only those will find entry into Paradise who have proved their merit through their deeds in the present world.

In later times, many unauthentic traditions became prevalent which claimed that entry into Paradise

was based on recommendation rather than on merit. For instance, the tradition that when there was a *Hafiz* or a memorizer of the Quran in a family, he would recommend his family members and, on his recommendation, they would gain entry into Paradise. Similarly, there is another unauthentic tradition. “The good are for God and the bad are for the Prophet,” that is, the bad will find Paradise on the Prophet’s recommendation. But all these traditions have no basis in reality.

The truth is that the present world is designed for the selection of deserving candidates for Paradise. Only those will find entry into Paradise who have proved their merit by their deeds in the present world. Chapter 53 of the Quran tells us that, in the Hereafter, man will find his place only according to his actions in this world (53:31-32).

Chapter two of the Quran tells us that “the day comes when there will be neither trading, friendship nor intercession” (2:254).

Believing in strategies like recommendation to gain entry into Paradise, is an underestimation of Paradise. The truth is that Paradise is a sublime and very refined place and only men and women of high calibre will be

settled there according to the records of human beings being prepared in this world. According to the Quran, Paradise is a place which is in the neighbourhood of God. Here, in this world of truth, only the truthful will find an eternal abode, “in the seat of truth with an all-powerful Sovereign” (54:55).

Inhabiting Paradise is to be in the neighbourhood of God (66:11). The notion that entry into the neighbourhood of God can be had just on the basis of human recommendation is totally baseless.

THE BUILDING OF A PERSONALITY

Man is born with great potential. He has to turn his potential into actuality on his own. By facing life's difficult situations as challenges, man reaches high levels of progress and develops a purified personality. This makes him deserving of Paradise.

Chapter 90 of the Quran says, “We have created man into a life of toil.” (90:4) The word ‘toil’ here has been used in a positive, rather than in a negative sense. When we look at it from this aspect, we find that here it means ‘struggle.’

That is, the condition of man's stay in the present world is such that he has to lead a life of struggle. He has to pursue a difficult course in life. This is essential for the building of a positive human personality. It is a fact which has been expressed in this saying of Samuels Smiles: "It is not ease but effort, not facility but difficulty that makes man."

Man is potentially like an ore. Machines are made from steel but it requires a long industrial process to produce it. Iron ore has first to undergo a long process of being heated in a blast furnace, and only then can steel be produced. Even then the metal has to go through various stages before it can take the form of machines.

The same is true of human beings. Man is born with great potential. But to turn nature's potential into actuality, he has to undergo various difficult stages in life. It is by going through these stages that man is able to develop himself intellectually and become a mature person. Without undergoing the processes of hard struggle, no one can become a man of high calibre which makes him deserving of Paradise.

Every difficult situation serves as a challenge in this world. By facing these challenges, man reaches high levels of progress and development which makes him deserving of Paradise.

CULTURAL INTRODUCTION OF PARADISE

Those people will find entry into Paradise who become as familiar with Paradise as if they were seeing it. They will be able to observe the Gardens of Paradise not only in scenes of nature but will also observe Paradise at the core of modern civilizational developments.

Chapter 47 of the Quran defines who the people of Paradise are. There is a verse in the Quran to this effect: “He will admit them into the garden He has already made known to them.” (47:6)

This verse tells us that what it takes to be deserving of Paradise is its realization in this world itself. In the present world, those who have known Paradise at the level of realization are the ones who will be ushered into Paradise in the Hereafter.

They are those who have such a deep realization that they have a craving for Paradise and will be introduced to Paradise in this same world. Paradise is entrenched in their thoughts. Such individuals will begin to see Paradise before entering it. They become as familiar with Paradise as if they were seeing it.

The Quran provides the primary source of this introduction to Paradise for man. A man develops

this capacity through reflection about Paradise aided by the Quran. Beyond that, there are two main methods for a practical introduction to Paradise: a natural introduction and a cultural introduction. A natural introduction means what a man realizes by his observation of natural scenes. Scenes of nature provide man with an introduction to Paradise from a distance.

A civilizational introduction to Paradise has become possible for the first time in the present world. The world developed by modern civilization is like a cultural introduction to Paradise. It means that the sophisticated material facilities of modern civilization are as it were, a means of allowing us to experience the pleasures of the world of Paradise. This introduction to Paradise has been arranged on behalf of God Himself through natural scenes and material comforts. If a man reflects at a conscious level, he will be able to observe the gardens of Paradise not only in scenes of nature but will also observe Paradise at the core of modern civilizational developments.

THE REALIZATION, THE PARADISE

Knowledge of the realization of truth is potentially inherent in every man. To convert this potential into actuality is another name for realization. Paradise is actually the habitat of realized persons who will be settled there eternally by the grace of God Almighty.

In this world, the last thing to be attained is realization; and in the Hereafter, the last thing to be found is Paradise. What is realization? Realization is another name for the discovery of the truth, that is the highest reality, that is God.

Knowledge of the realization of truth is potentially inherent in every man. To convert this potential into actuality is another name for realization.

One who reaches this high level of realization is called a realized person. Such people will be settled in Paradise. Paradise is actually the habitat of realized persons where they will be settled for all time by the grace of God Almighty!

Realization is just another name of an important aspect of wisdom. Indeed, realization is the name of an intellectual storm; it is the revolutionary experience which plays a major role in developing the human

personality. It is only by realization that a superior personality develops which is capable of being settled in the upper levels of Paradise. In the Quran, Paradise has been called the ‘Vicinity of God’.

Only such persons are able to stay in such a refined sphere as Paradise as are deserving of it. It is only those who have become God-conscious persons of a high level. It is for those who have attained the divine wavelength and have imbibed divine virtues. It is for those who have become no-problem persons to the ultimate extent. God will say, “This is the day when the truthful will benefit from their truthfulness. They shall forever dwell in gardens through which rivers flow. God is pleased with them and they with Him: that is the supreme triumph” (5:119).

Such persons are truly spiritually elevated. Such persons shall attain to a place in Paradise with honour and comfort. On the contrary, those who are far away from realization will be cast into the eternal dustbin of the universe, where they will experience the punishment of eternal regret and remorse.

PARADISE: A GIFT OF GOD

No human action is the key to Paradise. Human actions are meant only to attract the mercy of God. One who realizes God will find that God will turn to him and, by His special grace, He will decide about his entry into Paradise.

All the animals either walk or crawl to reach whatever place they want to be in. There is only one exception and that is of the fish. A fish cannot live without water, but the fish has no power to reach the water on its own. It will continue to writhe in pain, but it will never be able to reach the river until someone picks it up and puts it into the water.

This incident is symbolic of the reality of reaching Paradise. However much one may be virtuous or God fearing, one's personal deeds cannot lead one to Paradise. An individual can reach Paradise only when God in all His mercy leads him to enter Paradise. This is the reality which has been explained as follows: "Without doubt no one's actions will usher him into heaven. A companion once asked the Prophet, 'O Prophet of God, will this be true of you also?' The Prophet replied, 'Yes, it will only be if God envelops me in His forgiveness and in His mercy.'" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 5673)

The truth is that no human action is the key to Paradise. Human actions are meant only to attract the mercy of God. That is why, the greatest of human actions is the realization of God. One who fulfils the criterion of the realization of God will find that God will turn to him and, by His special grace, He will decide about his entry into Paradise. One can enter into Paradise only by the grace of God. Paradise is not a reward for one's actions. The truth is that human deeds over a few years can never measure up to what is required for entry into Paradise. Anyone who thinks that his actions on their own will gain him entry into Paradise will find in the Hereafter that he is just like someone who has just one rupee and wants to buy an aeroplane.

PARADISE AND MAN

Faith means man consciously discovers his Lord, the Creator through His creation. Gratefulness means acknowledgement of God's blessing. Whatever man has in this world is all God's blessing. To deserve Paradise one has to acknowledge the Giver from his heart.

Paradise and man are each other's counter-parts. They are complementary to one another. Paradise is made for man, and man is made for Paradise. The truth is that

Paradise is the sought after by man and man is sought after by Paradise. Man is incomplete without Paradise and Paradise is incomplete without man. It is part of the creation plan that human beings should be trained in this world in such a way that they may be held deserving of being lodged in the eternal world of Paradise.

In chapter 4 of the Quran the following verse has this to say: “Why should God punish you, if you render thanks to Him and believe in Him? God is appreciative and aware.” (4:147)

This means that it is not God’s creation plan that people should indulge in evil acts and make themselves deserving of Hell. According to God’s creation plan, man must make himself deserving of Paradise so that when he reaches the world of the Hereafter, he may be settled in the Garden of Paradise.

The commentator Abul Barkaat Al Nasafi, (d. in 1310) explains the above verse, thus “One who has attained God realization is the recipient of blessings, and gratitude is another name for the acknowledgement of these blessings.” (*Tafsir An-Nasafi*, Vol. 1, p. 409)

The truth is that both faith and gratefulness are interlinked. Faith means that man consciously discovers his Lord: he is introduced to the Creator through His creation. Gratefulness means acknowledgement of God’s blessing. Whatever man

has in this world is all God's blessing. For these blessings one has to acknowledge the Giver from his heart and without doubt this is the greatest form of worship for man.

IN THE GARDENS OF PARADISE

One who discovers this world as Paradise will start grazing in the Garden of Paradise here itself. He will derive spiritual food from every experience of the present world. Death for such a person will be like coming out of one room and entering another in his own house.

In one of the traditions which appears in different books of Hadith, Hazrat Anas reports that Prophet Muhammad once said, “When you pass through the gardens of Paradise, try to graze there.’ The question was asked, ‘What are the gardens of Paradise?’ To this Prophet Muhammad replied, “Remembering God together.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3510)

In this tradition, the word ‘Halaquz-zikr’, that is, recitation in groups, is used in a symbolic sense. It means that, opportunities for divine experiences are present everywhere. Recognize these opportunities

and use them. Make your living in this world like living in Paradise.

It has been stated in the Quran that the present world has been created similar to Paradise (2:25). That is, all those components that are present in a limited way in this world will be present without limits in Paradise. The present world is an imperfect version of Paradise, whereas Paradise is the perfect version of the present world.

One who discovers this paradisiacal similarity in the present world, will start experiencing Paradise in the present world itself. The present world will become like the meadows of Paradise for him and he will be able to derive spiritual food from every experience of the present world.

This is what is meant by religious awareness. One who is fully awakened in terms of his religious consciousness will feel, as if he is grazing in the gardens of paradise. For such a person the experience of death will be just coming out of one room and entering into another room in his own house.

THE AWARD OF PARADISE

In the present world if believers develop a purified personality, their award will be their selection to play an honoured role in the joyful, everlasting divine activities of Paradise.

The difference between the present world and the future world is not that of saying prayers and fasting, developing a particular identity in this world and after that getting the reward of Paradise in the next world.

In the present world believers have to develop a purified personality. This will result in their selection to play an honoured role in the joyful activities of Paradise.

Paradise is not just a luxury resort, but a vast realm of joyous activities. These activities can be described in one word: divine.

In the present world, human activities are of a limited material nature. In the Hereafter the activities will be unlimited, divine and everlasting in nature.

These activities of a noble and superior form will be performed by selected divine individuals with the help of the Angels. During these activities, the inhabitants of Paradise will make great discoveries. They will ascend

to high levels of spirituality, they will have experience of a superior order. They will have for company all the noble souls of heavenly society. They will attain divine achievements in a cosmic environment, and will live on such high planes of blessing and power as are not possible in this world.

This reality has been described thus in a tradition: “Paradise is what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has conceived of.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No: 4779)

WHAT IS PARADISE?

The first category of people of Paradise will be of those sincere people who will enjoy the comfortable life of Paradise. The second category will be of those who are overwhelmed by the perfections of the Paradise Maker. For them, the experience of Paradise will be a high-level experience of the realization of God.

A young man acquired a luxury car of the latest fashion and technology. He was very happy to see it. When he entered the car and sat on its comfortable seat he said: “I feel like a king.” This is one kind of person. On the other hand, another kind of person would

observe this luxury car and then would fall to thinking what a superb engineering mind it would take to design such a splendid car and then give it practical shape.

In this example, the first person is living in himself while the second person is thinking of its engineer. The first person is happy in the car while the second person is acknowledging the perfection of the car-maker.

From this example one can understand the case of Paradise. There will be two categories of people who will gain entry into Paradise. The first category will be of those who will be happy after getting the blessings of heaven and who will enjoy the comfortable life of Paradise. They are those people who are personally sincere, but who are unable to reach a high level of realization.

The second category will consist of those who were believers at the level of high realization. When these people are ushered into Paradise then, they will be overwhelmed by the perfections of the Paradise Maker. They will think: "How powerful is the God Who created feelings of pleasure, then created all the objects of pleasure and then made that ideal world of Paradise where both feelings of pleasure and objects of pleasure are present!" There they will lead their lives eternally without fear or sorrow in eternal Paradise. Feelings of pleasure and objects of pleasure

are both God's creations. Similarly, Paradise is also the creation of God. The experience of Paradise will, of course, be a high-level experience of the realization of God. The realization of Paradise is its primary aspect and appreciation of the comfort of Paradise is its secondary aspect.

IMPERFECT PARADISE, PERFECT PARADISE

The present world has everything which is to man's liking, but only to be tasted, not for satiation. So far as fulfilment is concerned, it can be granted only to the true believers whom God will find eligible for inhabiting the eternal world of Paradise in the Hereafter.

All those things that the Quran promises will be available to the believers in heaven, are also available on earth. Then what is the difference between the two? The difference is that the present world is an imperfect world, while Paradise is a perfect world. It is in this sense that the blessings of the present world are likened in the Quran to the blessings of Paradise (2:25).

Apparently the present world has everything which is

to man's liking. But these things are meant only to be tasted and are not meant for satiation. We get only the taste of those things in this present imperfect world. We do not get any sense of fulfilment from them here. So far as fulfilment is concerned it can be granted only to the true believers who God will find eligible for inhabiting eternal Paradise in the Hereafter.

It is very strange that in this vast universe the faculty of taste exists only in man. While it is true that the animals also have tongues, but they do not have the taste buds that are found in the human tongue to enjoy the tastes. This is true of all the other pleasurable sensations.

Man possesses this special capacity that shows that out of all the creatures, man is the only one who has been created for Paradise. Paradise is for man and man is for Paradise. Man has been singled out in being given such sensory perception so that he may partially experience the blessings of Paradise in the present imperfect world and then go on to develop a keen interest in the superior blessings of Paradise.

Man must acknowledge this special position that he enjoys and strive to realise his full potential in this world so that he can be held eligible for entry into the eternal world of Paradise in the Hereafter by God. This is the key for human success in the next world. Any shortcoming in this matter will lead to his failure.

THE INHERITANCE OF THE EARTH

In the present world, good and evil people exist side by side. In the world Hereafter, the Angels will separate the evil from the righteous and enter only the good people into the eternal world of Paradise.

The fish is a living creature. It has its own complete existence but it requires a habitat in which to survive. If the fish is taken out of water and thrown down in the desert, it will be the same fish but it will just wriggle for a short time there, and, in desert environment, unable to find the blessing of life, it will soon expire. This applies also to human beings. Man has a living existence in the complete sense but in actuality, he requires a habitat in which to live. The present world gives him just such a habitat. Man can survive and develop only on the planet earth. If he is taken off of the planet earth and placed on some other celestial body like the moon, he will be just like the fish out of water. He will make threshing movements with his arms and legs, like the fish wriggling in the desert, but not finding his habitat, he will soon breathe his last.

The present world's features are well known to

man, and, in the light of his knowledge he can fully understand what heaven and hell are like. If we study the matter, we find that on today's earth, all the things are present which will be there for man in Paradise. For instance, the scenes of nature here are so beautiful that when man looks at them he can understand that he is observing Paradise from a distance. But in the present world, good and evil people exist side by side. The evil people fill the world with corruption. Had it been possible to expel the evil people from the earth leaving only good people here, the earth would have become a model of Paradise. A Hebrew Prophet expressed this as follows: "So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (*Matthew*, 13:49-50).

This is similarly expressed in the Psalms of David: "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever." (*Psalms*, 37:29)

A CONTRADICTION IN NATURE

God created the present world to give man an opportunity to perform good deeds and develop a paradisiacal personality. In the Paradise of the Hereafter, God will only settle those people who He finds deserving, by virtue of their good deeds in this world.

In the entire universe there is only one planet which is favourable to human life. This is our planet earth. An American scientific institution revealed after substantial research that with the speed with which man is using up the resources of the earth, the planet will become uninhabitable by the year 2030. Subsequently, the present life support system on earth will become so disturbed that here man, as well as other living species, will face extinction. This matter has one very serious ideological aspect. Man according to his nature has unlimited desire, but, in this universe, the only world or planet on which man has been settled, possesses limited resources for continued life. Now this contradiction between the two, that is man with his unlimited desires and the limited means for life to continue, has become a well-established fact.

The Creator who created man is also the Creator of the earth. Then why is there such a great contradiction between the two: that is man and the earth. This contradiction is a clear argument in favour of the concept of Paradise. This difference can be explained only in terms of the Creator having divided human life into two phases—the phase prior to death, for which the Creator has made this present world, and the phase after death, for which the Creator has made another world, which is the world of the Hereafter.

This matter of contradiction can be explained by the creation plan of the Creator. The creation plan of the Creator is that in the present non-ideal or imperfect world, every man and woman should be given an opportunity to live out their lives, but in the perfect, or ideal world of the Hereafter, only those people will be accommodated who prove themselves to be deserving of being settled there by the virtue of their deeds. This present world is a selection ground. The final judgment will be done according to the records of the words and deeds of the people. Wise is he who can prove himself worthy of being ushered into the ideal world of the Hereafter. The unwise individual is one who is so oblivious to present opportunities that he is finally left with nothing but sorrow and regret.

THE GREATER EMPIRE

Often people build external empires in the material world. A realized soul develops a spiritual empire within himself which will eternally accompany him. If the former is a source of temporary happiness, the latter will become a source of eternal happiness for him.

Once a man became extremely appreciative of the extraordinary qualities that his son had developed in himself. Seeing his extraordinary qualities he exclaimed: "My son will build an empire!" The father's intuition proved right. When the son grew up, he set up a business, which, thanks to his God-given capabilities, made extraordinary progress. He even went on to create a business empire. But this empire did not prove to be an eternal companion. Finally, after a limited period of time, the son died and left this world in the same manner as all other people die and leave the world.

This is the case of the material empire. A material empire gives support only for a limited period of time. But there is another empire which can always remain with one. This is the empire of the intellect, in other words, intellectual development, spiritual

discovery, personality development, and the turning of the potential into the actual. One who develops intellectually in this way has been called a divine person in religious terms.

The divine or heavenly person is one who discovers God and who by using his cerebral ability, is able to understand the creation plan of God and tries to mould his life accordingly. He thus develops a divine character. Such a person will be lodged in eternal Paradise after his death. If others build external empires in the material world, a realized soul develops an empire within himself. A material empire gives support to a man only for a limited period of time, but a spiritual empire is one which will eternally accompany him. If the former is a source of temporary happiness, the latter is a source of eternal happiness.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE HEREAFTER

God will hand over the administration of the world Hereafter to the Angels. All those human connections or relationships will not be available to him which are now available at every level here. All work will be performed by the Angels as commanded by God.

The present world is given into the charge of human beings. All activities are performed here by man. The present world is based on man's connections. Directly or indirectly, all men and women are related to each other. Here one receives help from others. This connectivity is established at three levels: at the level of the family, the society, and the nation.

But the Hereafter will be totally different from the present world. In the Hereafter, things will be as they are in the present world, but the world Hereafter will be in charge of Angels. Those who are selected for Paradise will receive their reward in the Hereafter, and unbelievers will be punished. But in both conditions, the administrative arrangement will be totally handed over to the Angels.

In the present world, man finds sympathetic people

everywhere. Such individuals who help each other in their work are found at every level. This situation keeps man in a state of unawareness. He thinks, consciously or unconsciously that, just as his work is going on with the help of relatives or those unrelated to him in the present world, all his future works will be done in the same manner, in the Hereafter. This is a totally wrong perception. In the Hereafter, all those human connections or relationships will not be available to him which are now available at every level here. In the Hereafter all work will be performed by the Angels. These Angels will act only as commanded by God.

This situation is very serious. Taking the situation in the present world for granted, man came to believe that in the Hereafter also he would find such people as would come to his assistance. But the truth is that there will be no one who will do so. Everyone will have deserted him. He will find himself all alone. Except for the Angels, there will be no one to come to his rescue.

Man ought to think seriously about this in this world itself when he has a chance to correct himself.

PARADISE MATERIAL OR SPIRITUAL?

Eternal Paradise will be replete with joyful, sublime, divine intellectual and material activities. The inhabitants of Paradise, the Lord's honoured guests, will have the opportunity to avail of their unlimited capabilities in these joyful activities.

Once, there was an argument between Maulana Sayyad Sulaiman Nadvi (d. 1953) and Dr. Mohd. Iqbal (d. 1938). The issue was whether Paradise was material or spiritual. Sayyad Sulaiman Nadvi held that Paradise was material while Dr. Mohd. Iqbal was of the opinion that Paradise was spiritual. When they could not come to an agreement with each other on the issue, Maulana Sayyad Sulaiman Nadvi put an end to this argument by saying: "All right, you will go to your spiritual Paradise and we shall go to our material Paradise."

The truth is that, Paradise is both spiritual and material. Paradise is not merely a luxury resort. In the words of the Quran, people of Paradise will say on receiving the blessings there: "'This is what we were provided with before,' because they were given similar things." (2:25) This means that, the world of Paradise also will

have all the activities that take place in the present world. However, these activities will be in the form of joyful occupations (36:55). These will include those activities which may be called intellectual activities.

It is a fact that there will also be material blessing and comforts in Paradise. These blessings will be given to the inhabitants of Paradise as hospitality, such as is mentioned in one of the verses of the Quran: “As a rich hospitality from One who is ever forgiving and most merciful.” (41:32)

The inhabitants of Paradise will be busy in joyful, sublime, divine activities. This will continue for all eternity. In this way, the inhabitants of Paradise will have the opportunity to avail of their unlimited capabilities. They will not have to earn a living to acquire material things. Their position will be that of guests and they will be provided with all types of hospitality by the Lord Himself.

THE CONCEPT OF PARADISE

The items of comfort and luxury in Paradise will be only for the reception of the people of Paradise. The dwellers of Paradise would bring about a superior form of divine civilization full of enjoyable, intellectual activities which will continue for all eternity.

Tawfiq al-Hakim (d.1987) was a well-known Egyptian writer. According to his own statement, he suffered from an intellectual contradiction. He writes: "Outwardly, I lead the same kind of life as others do in such cities. But inwardly I cherish certain beliefs and noble deals. The cause of my sadness lies in this contradiction between my outward and inward life. That is to say that my outward and inward states are at variance with one another. This is the reason for my anguish." He further writes: "If I did not find an opportunity in Paradise to further my knowledge, it would become almost impossible for me to live comfortably in Paradise." Paradise is just a luxury resort in the minds of such people as that of the Egyptian writer. It is but natural that intelligent people will not find any appeal in such a concept of Paradise. It is because, besides physical comforts, man is also in need of intellectual satisfaction. Scholars

and preachers depict Paradise as a luxury house with all kinds of physical comforts devoid of intellectual activities. Naturally an educated man finds no appeal in this concept of Paradise which does not meet his real requirement. The truth is that the items of comfort and luxury in Paradise would be only for entertainment or reception of the people of Paradise. The actual activity of the dwellers of Paradise would be to bring about a superior form of divine civilization full of enjoyable intellectual activities which will continue for all eternity.

THE FEELING OF ETERNITY

Man's awareness of his eternity and imminent death are a source for spiritual purification and personality development for him. Thinking of eternity makes him very grateful to God, while the concept of accountability in the Hereafter becomes a source of reform for him.

The Creator has created man with a sense of eternity. That is why the human genetic code gives no forewarning of death. Man lives with the feeling, at an unconscious level, that he has an eternal existence. He lives as if death is not meant for him.

The reality is that every man born into this world has to die. But, within himself man feels that creation-wise he has an eternal existence.

These twin feelings place everyone in a very delicate situation, that is, living with the awareness of death vis-a-vis an awareness of the reality of eternity. Everyone regards himself as an eternal being, yet lives in the conviction that he has to die one day, for he is not destined to live in the present world for all time to come.

This apprehension of eternity is in one sense a great blessing for man, for it gives him the conviction that unlike the other entities of the universe, he has an eternal existence. But along with this, what he must do is always remember death and the accountability for his actions in the Hereafter. Living with this dual focus is undoubtedly the most difficult test for man. Only that person will gain entry into Paradise who passes this test.

If man is keenly aware, these twin feelings will become a great stimulus to his personality development. When he thinks of his eternal existence, he will be very grateful to God, his Creator, who has granted him that great blessing of eternity. On the one hand, the

matter of death and accountability in the Hereafter will continue to become a source of reform for his personality. On the other hand, he will be a thankful servant of God and will live as a God-fearing person. There is no greater source for spiritual purification and the building of the personality.

AN EXCEPTIONAL CASE

If one develops true belief in death and the Afterlife, it will become the source of developing Hereafter-oriented thinking in man. This is the ticket to Paradise.

There are countless creations in the vastness of space—stars and the planets, the sun and the moon, and on the earth there are the rivers and the mountains, the trees, and the animals, etc... None of these are concerned with death and the Hereafter. Human beings have always been studying the universe. In this modern age, the scope of study and observation has been greatly increased with the help of the telescopes and the microscopes.

In this vast universe human beings stand out as an exception in that they die at a particular time

and after that, they have to start a new life in the Hereafter which at the moment is unobservable. This unobservable world will become observable only when human beings enter the next stage of life.

This exceptional case of death and the life Hereafter is undoubtedly the greatest trial of man. On the basis of the common human principles of observation and experience, no man can understand the issues of death and the Afterlife. To understand the concept of Afterlife, it is necessary for man to develop the capacity for detached thinking. He has to elevate his thinking above the general principle of observation. This is possible only for those who have such abilities to understand the issues of death and the Afterlife and plan accordingly.

Man remains unaware of the exceptional aspects of death and the Afterlife for he does not make it a dominant part of his thinking. Either he does not believe in death and the Afterlife or if he does believe in them, he does so only at the traditional or ritual level, which is of no avail. The true belief in death and the Afterlife is that which becomes the source of developing Hereafter-oriented thinking in man.

THIS WORLD AND THE HEREAFTER

A materialist is concerned only about the life before death, whereas a Hereafter-oriented person makes preparations in this world for the life after death.

This world is all about life today, while the Hereafter is all about life tomorrow. Human existence in this world necessities being concerned about the life before death, whereas in the Hereafter the major concern is about having made preparations in this world for the life after death.

For a human being, there are two kinds of life: The world-oriented life and the Akhirat-oriented or Hereafter-Oriented life. The demands of the world-oriented life are that man should make worldly success his objective. This means that he is interested only in the things of this world. He understands both success and failure to be worldly matters. His thoughts are focused only on this world and his heart is entrenched in the affairs of the world. Such a person is a materialist.

A materialist is one who can feel love only for the world. He is happy to be in possession of the things of the world and when the things of the world are

not available, he is disappointed. Finding a place of honour in this world gives him a sense of pride, while experiencing dishonour here leads to a sense of negativity.

The Hereafter-oriented life is quite different from this. The Hereafter-oriented person is one for whom the Hereafter becomes his sole concern, who is always thinking about the Hereafter, who is concerned about the eventualities after death, who remembers the accountability that will be required of him on the day of judgement. The Hereafter-oriented man is one whose mind is dominated by his apprehension of the Hereafter and who is so overwhelmed by them that everything in this world seems worthless. He is one who is avid for Paradise in the Hereafter, and is highly disturbed when he thinks of the future hell. He is one who sees Doomsday before it has actually come and who can vividly imagine himself standing before God on that fateful day.

DEPRIVED OF MEETING WITH EACH OTHER

God on the one hand, created man with unlimited desires, and on the other hand, placed all the objects for the fulfilment of his desires in eternal Paradise. To fulfil one's desires one has to prove oneself eligible for entry into Paradise.

The river has two banks which can never come together. This parallels the lives of human beings in the sense that God on the one hand, created man with unlimited desires, and on the other hand, gave him all the objects for the fulfilment of his desires, yet no one is able to fulfil his desires in this world. It is as though, on the one hand, there is the world of pleasure, on which it is written 'no takers', while, on the other hand, there is the human world which is saying sotto voce: "Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink." (Samuel Taylor Coleridge: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*)

This contradictory situation has gone on for thousands of years. Everyone, consciously or unconsciously, wants to know the answer to this conundrum, but no one has been able to find the answer.

One such expression of it is that every popular novel is a tragedy. The novel is an expression of human

experience. And in the present situation it is only tragedy that addresses the human mind, not comedy. This situation confirms what religious faiths say about the Hereafter. The explanation of this situation is that, “the two shores” which cannot be brought together in the pre-death period, will be united in the post-death period. And then the individual will be able to have the sense of fulfilment which he could not get in this world. This fraught situation will end in the Hereafter. At that time it will be possible for man to write the story of his life not as a tragedy but as a comedy in the real sense of the expression.

THE SEARCH FOR PARADISE

According to the creation plan of God, the world of Paradise in the Hereafter is the place where all of man's desires will be fulfilled. The present world is a place to prepare for the desired Paradise.

Everyone has the concept of a beautiful world—a world that is perfect, that is standard, and in which all his desires can be fulfilled. This mental image is the greatest spur to action in all human beings. Every man and woman is engaged in achieving perfection. They

expend their strength and energy in the attempt to attain it, but in the end it transpires that no one feels that he has been able to find the world he desires. Every man starts his life with high morale, but every man dies with the feeling that, despite all his efforts, he has failed to find what he wants.

This, without exception, is the history of the whole of mankind. This is the biggest question facing humanity. Why is it that people start their lives with expectations and hopes, but die with feelings of deprivation?

The answer is that the beautiful world so firmly fixed in man's imagination, is, according to the creation plan of God, the world of Paradise. And that Paradise will be found in the stage of life after death, not in the stage of life before death. Human beings want to have their desired heaven in the present world, but the attainment of Paradise is not possible in the present world.

In this case, the example of man vis-a-vis Paradise is like the fish and water. The comfort zone of the fish is in the water, not out of the water. In the same way, human beings will be able to find comfort only in Paradise. Out of the Paradise, they will not find comfort or fulfilment.

The search for Paradise is actually another name for the search for the future. And the future can be

found only in the time to come. No one can find it in the present world. One who discovers the truth will understand that the present world is a place to prepare for the desired Paradise, and is not the place to find his own desired Paradise.

NOISE, NOISE, AND NOISE

Paradise is an ideal world where there will be no noise. Noise deprives man of the company of the Angels. Those who adopt the noise culture will never savour Paradise.

Noise is a problem. Noise is an evil. Noise is pollution. In the present day, noise is one of the things that are regarded as polluters. Noise produces destruction in the same way as a bomb explosion causes destruction. The difference between noise explosion and bomb explosion is only apparent. There is no real difference between the two.

In the present age, the noise problem has greatly increased with loudspeakers, public gatherings, slogan shouting, transport, car and truck horns, and the mobile phones, etc. In earlier times, the donkey was considered as the creature making the worst noise.

But in the present age, it is man who has become the worst offender. The noise he makes is a thousand times worse than this.

Noise is not an innocuous thing, for it drives human beings away from the company of the Angels. And one who is deprived of the company of the Angels, easily becomes the playmate of devils. Angels are the invisible power that protect all human beings from evil. The company of the Angels develops a divine personality in the individual. One who is deprived of the company of Angels will necessarily become a hellish personality. Such people will never be able to savour the fragrance of Paradise.

Paradise is an ideal world where there will be no noise. Noise and Paradise cannot exist together. This being so, those who adopt the noise culture are making themselves unworthy of being candidates for Paradise. There is only one fate for such people and that is being cast into the pandemonium of hell, where they will eternally suffer its din and commotion with no hope of ever escaping from it.

THE CAUSE OF DISSATISFACTION

Paradise is the home of man. According to the creation plan of God man has been inhabited in the present earth on a temporary basis for a trial. If he does good deeds, he will make himself eligible to receive the blessings of Paradise in the eternal world of the Hereafter.

In the present world, every man and woman lives to a great extent with a sense of dissatisfaction. It is true of almost everyone that he lives with the feeling of losing and not with the feeling of gain. This condition is so common that there are very few exceptions to it. What is the reason for this? It is actually caused by what could be called homesickness. As is well known, when man was created, he was settled in Paradise. It was, as if Paradise was the home of man. But later on, man was cast out of Paradise and sent to the planet earth. Historically speaking all those who are here on the existing planet earth are no better than refugees. This is the real cause of people's dissatisfaction. Unconsciously, every human being has become homesick. No human planning has successfully removed this feeling. The solution to this issue is just one and that is, to make man aware of the creation plan of God. People should be told that they are on

WHO DESERVES PARADISE?

the present earth on a temporary basis and if they do good deeds, they will make themselves eligible to receive the blessings of Paradise.

When anyone travels to his home town, he has to face different kind of difficulties on the journey, but he has the satisfaction of knowing that after a few hours, he will eventually reach his destination. If people were to become aware of the creation plan of God, they too would come to look upon themselves as travellers with just a few hours to go to complete the journey. Realizing the success the future can bring will make their present problems unimportant for them. This is the only way to relieve people of their feelings of dissatisfaction and tension. In this situation, there can be no more effective plan.

WHO DESERVES PARADISE?

Paradise is a colony of truthful people. In the present world those people who proved themselves to be totally truthful human beings of sterling character will be held deserving of receiving an eternal seat in the neighbourhood of Almighty God (54:55).

Paradise is an ineffable world of happiness and comfort. Paradise will be given to those who

pay the price of unremittingly living a life of sterling character in this world, thus proving their merit. Paradise is another name for receiving an eternal seat in the neighbourhood of Almighty God (54:55). This kind of superlative abode can be granted only to those fortunate people who have the courage to pay the necessarily high price for it.

To find a seat of indescribable wonder in Paradise, man has to do deeds of an extraordinary nature. That is why it is necessary for man to be able to turn the invisible into the visible. Living in time and space, he has to be able to develop such a vision as can reach beyond time and space. In the dark jungle of words, he must find the light of meaning; living in the ocean of desires, he has to save himself from getting immersed therein. Being a mountain of egoism he must rid of his ego. Living in the midst of the maleficent, he must make himself the well-wisher of others. Being a weak person, he has to play the role of a powerful person; possessing total freedom, he must surrender himself voluntarily to God Almighty. He must be able to hear unspoken words, and acknowledge unseen realities. He must insist on speaking the truth in a world full of falsehood. In an environment of dishonesty, he must maintain his own honesty.

The Angels of God are active day in and day out

preparing the list of those who will be held deserving of entry into Paradise to live in the neighbourhood of God in the Hereafter. Those who have attained high levels of realization are able to concentrate their attention on the supreme God alone, the great desire for Whom has rendered every attractive thing of this world unattractive. Their sense of the glory of God obliterates all emotions or feelings of their own greatness and pride. Because of the fear of God's chastisement, they cannot enjoy any pleasurable thing even in the midst of this world of pleasure.

These are the people for whom material or worldly progress or worldly deprivation seems equally meaningless. These are the people who, instead of holding themselves to be in the right, prefer to say rather, 'I was wrong.' Those people will be inhabited in Paradise who bear godly qualities. Those who make themselves the bearer of godly qualities in this present world, are the people who will be held deserving of entry in Paradise. Paradise cannot be given to anyone by mysterious reasons, it will rather be given by known reasons. Man has to make himself deserving of them in the present world itself.

Paradise is a colony of truthful people. In the present world those people who proved themselves to be totally truthful human beings are being recruited.

They will be held deserving of being inhabited in the eternal world of Paradise.

DIVINE CIVILIZATION

The present world is only an introduction to Paradise, built by the scientific community, while the Divine Paradise will be built by the realized community with the help of Angels.

The Quran tells us: He will admit them into the Garden He has already made known to them. (47:6)

What is the source of this introduction? This is in actual fact the present-day human civilization. Prior to the emergence of this civilization man lived on the same planet earth, but there existed no paradise-like attraction in the human life of those times. Even the palaces of the kings were just a collection of stones. Our civilization for the first time gave comfort and beauty to human life on this earth. In this way life in this world became a distant introduction to paradise. But due to certain limitations this earth, which was an introduction to Paradise, served only as a partial introduction.

How did the present 'Paradise' come into being? It was in fact the scientific community which made the building of 'Paradise' possible through their discoveries. But this present world was only an introduction to Paradise. In the next phase of life, the real Paradise will be built. If the present world is human Paradise, the world hereafter will be the divine Paradise. The human Paradise was built by the scientific community, while the divine Paradise will be built by the realized community with the support of Angels.

The present world is a training ground for realized souls. Every man born into this world necessarily undergoes this training course. Those who are not able to achieve success in this training course will be rejected in the next phase of life, while those who succeed will be selected to form the realized community, who will build the perfect Paradise in the next phase of life. There will be all sorts of activities in the world of Paradise, such as we find in this world. But with the difference that in this present world, human activities are marred by all kinds of limitations, while in Paradise, all these activities will be performed in boundless divine environment.

THE LIFE OF PARADISE

Boredom arises because of the limit of our ability to enjoy things, rather than pleasure itself being limited. Paradise is the place where pleasure will be received by all to a higher degree of perfection, and all limitations to the capability to enjoy such pleasure will be removed.

Once, in conversation with a Japanese person whom I happened to meet on a visit to Japan, in December, 1990, I remarked that, the present world is temporary abode whereas the Hereafter is an eternal abode, and that man should build his “Paradise” in the eternal world. But this person’s response surprised me. He said: “People get bored after sometime with comforts and pleasure. In the modern world the problem of boredom has become widespread. That being so, what is the use of eternal Paradise?”

People who do not believe in the Hereafter say such things repeatedly. But this is just a fallacy. The fact is that, we are beset by boredom when we exhaust our ability to enjoy things, rather than the desire to enjoy pleasure comes to an end.

People make the assumption that when we want to savour some pleasure, after some time, we feel we

have had enough. And then there is no pleasure left to us. But, in itself, this assumption is wrong. The fact is that, man is by nature insatiable. What man loves he wants to enjoy forever.

But in the present world, human beings suffer from all kinds of limitations. Therefore, whenever a man wants to enjoy something he loves, after a while, his limitations become a barrier to enjoyment. Despite having desires, he loses the capacity to enjoy things. For example, when we eat delicious food, its taste does not end for us, but our stomach gets filled so we have to stop eating. Similarly, often wealthy people shun foods they love to eat in spite of having the desire for them, because they fear that they will become obese and victims of diseases.

This is the case with all other pleasures. The truth is that boredom arises because of the limit of our ability to enjoy things and not because of pleasure itself being limited.

Paradise is such a place where, not only will every pleasure be given to its denizens but such pleasure will be of a higher degree of perfection and all limitations to the capability to enjoy such pleasure will be removed.

In Paradise this contradiction will end, that is, of man wanting to enjoy things but being unable to do so because his limitations stand in the way of enjoying the things of his choice. As such Paradise will become a place of eternal happiness for human beings.

In this world, the boredom that people experience, is actually the result of this contradiction, that man is born as an idealist, wanting to have things in their ideal form, whereas in this world things are very far from being ideal. This is the real reason for boredom.

A man will run after something he loves. Before he gets it, he lives with the false feeling that, this is exactly the ideal thing which he had been seeking all along. But after acquiring it, he comes to realize that it falls far short of the required ideal. That is why, in this world man has pleasure of seeking, but he does not have the pleasure of finding.

In the present world, there is pleasure for man but it is deceptive, whereas in the Hereafter the pleasure will be ideal. Everything in the Hereafter will be ideal. For this reason, it will become the source of real and unlimited pleasure for man. What one wants, one will get in Paradise and because it will reach the highest degree of perfection, there will be no question of boredom.

A TICKET TO PARADISE

The price of Paradise in the Hereafter is that the person acknowledges God's greatness, lives with modesty and develops a purified personality (20:76) in this world itself.

On one of my journeys to the western world, I met a Muslim of about 50 years of age, who said, "I want a ticket to Paradise. Tell me what this ticket to Paradise is?"

The fact is that there is no such window where a ticket to Paradise may be bought. It is not a question of a ticket to paradise. It is a question of having a divine personality. Ineffable Paradise will be given to those who have developed this divine personality. Entry into Paradise will not be on the basis of a ticket. The price of Paradise is man's own existence. Only by paying the price of his existence can one gain entry into the world of Paradise.

The condition for admission to Paradise is that the person should reach there with a purified personality (20:76). This means that he is such a person in whom the purified spirit dwells, whose heart and mind are free of impurities and who has grown a garden of divinity within himself. The present world is such

that, on the one side there is mud and on the other side there is clean water. A man may pollute himself in mud or bathe in clean water and purify himself. Those who pollute themselves will be thrown into hell in the Hereafter, while those who purify themselves will dwell in the eternal bliss of Paradise.

Acknowledgement of God's greatness is to purify our personality and to do the reverse is to pollute our personality. Similarly an opportunity comes in which a man gives evidence of high morality while the other person gives proof of a base moral character. An opportunity arises for a man to give another person his due, while another person denies the right of others. An opportunity arises for a man to follow the path of modesty, while another person follows the path of arrogance or rebellion. In each case, the first person is the one who purifies his personality and such persons will definitely find a place in the refined world of Paradise. On the contrary, the second person is the one who pollutes his personality and, as such, Hell will be the abode of such people.

THE WISH LIST

The believer is one who has Paradise on his wish list, which is the world of eternal and ideal blessings where he will see his Lord, where he will meet noble, honest people, where he will live his life in the shadow of the divine blessings of the Almighty.

I read the story of Cleary Simpson, a highly educated woman. After completing her education she continued to do different types of temporary jobs until finally she got a job to her liking in America's Time Magazine. At the time I wrote this article, she was the Advertising Sales Director of Time Magazine's New York office.

Simpson's smiling photo is inset in an article that appeared on 5 August, 1991, p. 4. She was extremely happy to have found this post. In the caption below her picture, her happiness was expressed in these words: "Working for Time was always on my wish list."

Everyone regards something as the greatest thing one can look forward to. He lives desiring it, he sees it in his dreams and he lives his life waiting to find his cherished thing. It is marked as a top priority on his wish list. There is no one in the present world, who is free from such a wish list, which becomes an obsession for him.

The believer is one, who has Paradise on his wish list, which is the world of eternal and ideal blessings where he will see his Lord, where he will meet noble, honest people, where he will live his life in the shadow of the divine blessings of the Almighty, in a world that will be free from vain or sinful talk (56:25) and free from noise and tension. It will be an environment which will resound with words of praises for God, where there will be peace, tranquillity and security (56:26) and from which fear and sorrow will have been eliminated (35:34). This will be a world where there will be complete freedom (76:20), and these pleasures will be limitless.

THE FIFTEEN BILLION YEAR PLANNING

This process of realization, intellectual development, is an eternal process that initially starts in this world, and it will continue in its ultimate form in the Hereafter. It is this realization that qualifies man for entry into Paradise in the 'seat of truth with an all-powerful sovereign.' (54:55)

According to scientific accounts, about 15 billion years ago, at God's behest, a large cosmic ball came into existence in space. In it all the particles were present which are a part of our Universe today. At God's instigation, an explosion took place in this enormous ball. This explosion in scientific terms is called the Big Bang.

After the explosion of the cosmic ball, all its particles were scattered throughout the vastness of space. After that, according to God's creation plan, the particles started gathering in different forms. The gathering of these particles created unlimited stars, the Milky Way, dark matter and then the solar system. In this way, gradually the starry firmament came into existence, which we call the Universe.

Thereafter, God, selected this planet earth to execute His special plan. After action and reaction over a long

period, the planet earth cooled down. With God's permission, water was formed on it. Then the rain, the rivers and the oceans came into existence. About three-fourths of the planet earth was covered with water. Thereafter, according to the creation plan of God, vegetation appeared on the planet earth and the dry land was covered with greenery and forests.

After this, according to the special creation plan of God for the planet earth, the next stage came into existence. That is, the world of animals came into existence. The earth was populated with different kinds of animals, fishes, birds, cattle and other types of living objects.

According to the creation plan of God, the next step was for human beings to be born and put on the planet earth. The first man Adam and his wife Eve were then born and from this first couple the entire human race was born. The population of human beings gradually spread out all over the world.

After this, another part of God's creation plan came into existence. It was the birth of the prophets. God sent His messengers among all the human beings who were settled on the earth. All these prophets were humans. This was because the Creator wanted them

to tell human beings in a language understandable to them what the creation plan of God for them was.

The arrival of the prophets continued over long periods of time. The first man, Adam himself, was also a Prophet. After that, the Prophets came to every race. For example, Prophet Noah, Prophet Abraham, Prophet Moses, Prophet Jesus and finally Prophet Muhammad.

Through the prophets, God informed the people of every race that the present world has been created to serve as a selection ground and that the real and eternal place for human resettlement was in Paradise. Paradise is eternal and also ideal in every respect. But entry into Paradise will be only on a selective basis.

In the present world, the system of invisible recordings of God has been established on a large scale. According to this system, a constant record of the deeds of every man and woman is being prepared. This record will be presented on the Day of Judgement. According to the records of the deeds of the people, those will be selected who are held deserving of being lodged in the ideal world of Paradise. God wanted to give this special reward to selected people who may live with every kind of pleasure in the joyous environment

of the perfect world of Paradise so that they may experience total fulfilment of their desires. Those who are found undeserving of Paradise will eternally suffer the punishment of deprivation and remorse in the universal dustbin.

God did not want to create this world by a miracle, but rather through cause and effect, in the full sense. For example, Moses was the Prophet of God. He cast a piece of wood on the ground and by God's decree, it became a living snake. Had God wanted, He could have created a whole universe in this miraculous way. But had He done so, there would have been no evolution of human creativity. Neither science, nor civilization would have come into existence. Therefore, God created the universe on a long-term basis, so that men might use their thinking skills and reach the highest level of intellectual development. It was a plan that took a long time to unfold. In fact it took about 15 billion years to reach completion.

It has been repeatedly said in the Quran that the sky and the land and all the things in them are made for human beings. Looked at in this way, the 15 billion year-creation plan of the universe was solely for man's benefit. What is now required of man? That is just one thing: the realization of God. What man

has to do is reflect upon God's creation and achieve this realization of God in this world itself. It is this realization which is the price of eternal Paradise. This process of realization is not limited in nature. It starts in the present world and continues right into the world Hereafter. It is an eternal process, the starting of which is known but whose end remains unknown. The process of the attainment of realization starts initially in this world, and it will continue in its ultimate form in the Hereafter. This realization is the real distinction of human beings. It is this realization, which qualifies man for entry into Paradise in the 'seat of truth with an all-powerful sovereign.' (54:55)

The present global warming and coronavirus pandemic is a signal from God alerting man to the fact that the first stage of creation is about to come to an end, that is, the stage of selection of man. That now the time has come for the Lord of the Universe to reveal Himself. With perfect justice, He will decide people's eternal future. Now the ultimate moment has come for man to wake up from his slumber and, by making due preparations, make himself worthy of finding a place in eternal Paradise, in the world of the Hereafter.

MORE BOOKS OF MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

BOOKS

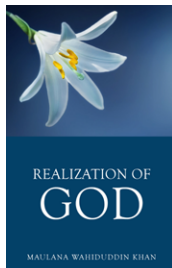
Love of God



The book explains that belief in God begins with the discovery of God. When this happens, all those high and noble manifestations expressed in such words as love, gratitude and remembrance of God come into evidence.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

Realization of God



The book explains that the Realization of God, *maarifah*, is the essence of religion. God-realization is the spirit of Islam, it makes one's Islam a living thing.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

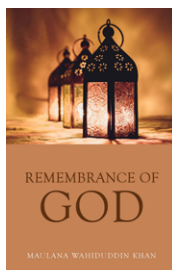
God-Oriented Life



The book explains that man has only one thing to give to God and that is to acknowledge Him, and live a God-oriented life. Such a life is a life of *taqwa*, a cautious life.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

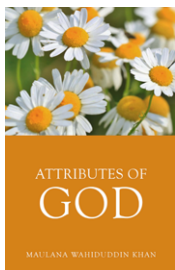
Remembrance of God



Remembrance of God is the greatest form of worship. Remembering God means that whatever a person sees or whatever he experiences, he should make it a point of reference for the remembrance of God.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

Attributes of God



When a person reflects on the existence of God and His creation, various aspects of the attributes of God, *asma-e-husna*, appear to him and he is able to understand these different aspects of God. It is this relationship which is called God-realization.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

Tazkiyah Purification of the Soul



The book outlines various principles of how to undertake *tazkiyah* within oneself so as to develop a purified personality that may be found eligible for inhabiting the eternal world of paradise.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

Read more such books, watch videos and listen audios of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan at www.cpsglobal.org

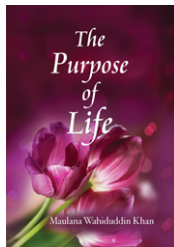
Donate: www.cpsglobal.org/donation

Buy printed copies from Goodword: www.goodwordbooks.com

MORE BOOKLETS OF MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

BOOKLETS

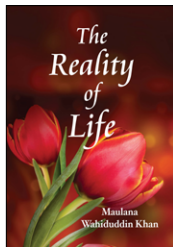
The Purpose of Life



The book explains the creation plan of God, told by God through His prophets throughout human history, that this life is a test. After death, God will mete out rewards or punishments commensurate with the record of human beings on earth.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

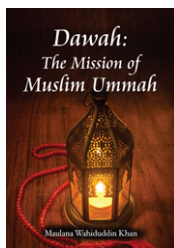
Reality of Life



The book explains that man harbours unlimited desires in his heart, but these desires remain unfulfilled. Desires can only be fulfilled in eternal Paradise if one lives one's life as per the creation plan of God in this world.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

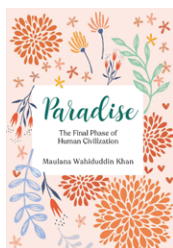
Dawah: The Mission of Muslim Ummah



The author says that dawah work is the mission of Muslim Ummah. He urges them to renounce violence and peacefully engage in dawah work based on sincere well-wishing.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

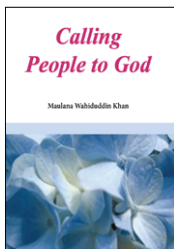
Paradise: The Final Phase of Human Civilization



The book explains that man has been seeking a Paradise on earth for thousands of years and only those who live a God-oriented life in this world will inhabit eternal Paradise in the hereafter.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

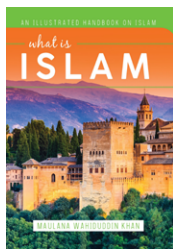
Calling People to God



The book explains the essence of dawah work which has been termed in the Quran as 'the call to God'. The Call to God aims at bringing people closer to their Creator and Sustainer.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

What is Islam



The book explains that everything in the universe except man has been compulsively subjected to God's will. It is only man whom God wants to submit to His Will of his own choice.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

Read more such books, watch videos and listen audios of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan at www.cpsglobal.org

Donate: www.cpsglobal.org/donation

Buy printed copies from Goodword: www.goodwordbooks.com

MORE LEAFLETS OF MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

LEAFLETS

The Destination of Man



The Creator of man has created him as an eternal creature and has divided his life into two stages—the pre-death period in this world for a test and eternal post death period for reward or punishment, based on how he performs in this world.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

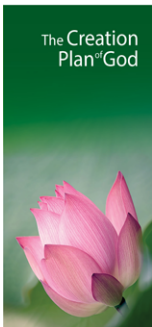
Does God Exist?



The leaflet explains that all over the universe there are clear signs of planning, design and intelligent control. These signs lead us to believe that there is a Creator of creatures, there is a Designer of designs, and there is a Mover of all movements.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

The Creation Plan of God



The leaflet explains the creation plan of God, that the real aim of creation is to select those who are fit to inhabit the world of Paradise. Evil people will not be selected to inhabit Paradise.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

God-Oriented Life



The leaflet explains that the concept of God provides man with an ideology in which loss is turned to gain and in which adversity brings with it good tidings. Submission to God and living a God-oriented life is the only way of life for both man and the universe.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

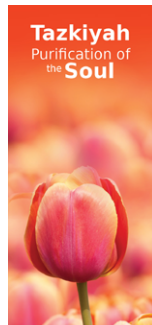
The Discovery of God



The leaflet explains that the discovery of God means discovery of a Being who is at once Creator, Master and Sustainer of all creation. Everything has been made by Him and Him alone, and receives eternal sustenance from Him.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

Tazkiyah: Purification of the Soul



Tazkiyah, to a modern man refers to reform or deconditioning and reengineering his mind to make him capable of seeing reality 'as it is' and thus become a positive, intellectually developed personality.

[Click Here to Read Now](#)

Read more such books, watch videos and listen audios of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan at www.cpsglobal.org

Donate: www.cpsglobal.org/donation

Buy printed copies from Goodword: www.goodwordbooks.com

In the book entitled *Paradise: Living in God's Neighbourhood*, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan writes that Paradise is another name for eternal life in the neighbourhood of God (66:11). In the world before death, which for man is a partial introduction to Paradise, man lives in the neighbourhood of God at the level of mind and feeling. After death in the Hereafter, his living in the world of God—eternal Paradise—will be a reality, where one can find Paradise in the perfect sense.

In the present world those people are being selected who in respect to their virtues or character are worthy of being lodged in the neighbourhood of God. Their thinking, activities, feelings, behaviour and dealings must all pass the ethical criterion which is required to become God's neighbour. It is only people such as these who will be selected for this honour. This selection will be based on the records kept by the angels of man's deeds.

Man is potentially like an ore. Machines are made from steel but it requires a long industrial process to produce it. Iron ore has first to undergo a long process of being heated in a blast furnace, and only then can steel be produced. Even then the metal has to go through various stages before it can take the form of machines.

The same is true of human beings. Man is born with great potential. But to turn nature's potential into actuality, he has to undergo various difficult stages in life. It is by going through these stages that man is able to develop himself intellectually and become a mature person. Without undergoing the processes of hard struggle, no one can become a man of high calibre which makes him deserving of Paradise.



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021) was an Islamic scholar, spiritual guide and an Ambassador of Peace. Having received international recognition for his work, the Maulana authored over 200 books and recorded thousands of lectures giving the rational interpretation of Islamic concepts, prophetic wisdom and the spiritual meaning of Quran and Islam in the contemporary style. His English translation of the Quran is widely appreciated as simple, clear and in contemporary style. He founded *Centre for Peace and Spirituality International* in 2001 to re-engineer the minds of people towards God-oriented living and present Islam in the modern idiom based as it is on peace, non-violence and spirituality.

CPSInternational
centre for peace and spirituality

www.cpsglobal.org
info@cpsglobal.org

Goodword

www.goodwordbooks.com
info@goodwordbooks.com

ISBN: 978-93-91481-89-6



9 789391 481896