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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



Society is only as good as the individuals who constitute it.

A MAGAZINE FOR THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

This is a current magazine. Its articles are based on sound principles of reason and science with a particular emphasis on the spirit of Islam rather than the form or the ritual. All the articles have been either written by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, translated from his Urdu writings, or based on his writings developed by a team trained and guided by him.

Spirit of Islam bimonthly...

- ▶ Presents Islam, the religion of nature, in the contemporary idiom to help Muslims rediscover Islam from the original sources
- ▶ Explains Creation plan of God for humankind
- ▶ Enlightens people on the subject of global peace
- ▶ Addresses contemporary issues
- ▶ Assists the readers to deal with life's challenges
- ▶ Offers Spirituality to a wider circle of seekers
- ▶ Fosters greater communal harmony through religious understanding

United in prayers
SOI Editorial Committee

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

ISSUE 113 JULY - AUGUST 2023

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FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF'S DESK



Prof Farida Khanam is an author, editor, translator, public speaker and former professor of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Among her books are 'A Simple Guide to Islam' and 'A Study of World's Major Religions'. She has translated into English many books authored by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. Currently the chairperson of CPS International, she is a regular contributor of articles to various publications. Prof Khanam has edited Maulana's English translation of the Quran and has also translated his Urdu commentary on the Quran into English. She can be reached at spiritofislamperiodical@gmail.com

I WAS IMPORTANT

MIR TAQI MIR (1723-1810) was an Indian Urdu poet and one of the pioneers who gave shape to the Urdu language itself. He is remembered as one of the best poets of the Urdu language. He wrote a verse that goes like this:

*"Kehne laga ke dekh ke chal rah bekhobar,
Mein bhi kabhi kisi ka sar-e-pur ghurur tha."*

(Trans: It told me, "O ignorant man! Walk carefully, I once held a place of pride on an able body.)

The context of this couplet is that once the poet went to a graveyard, where his foot hit a dead human skull. He felt as if the skull that his foot had hit was in communion with him. The skull seemed to say that a person should never forget his reality, no matter how rich or famous he might have been during his life in the world. Everyone must leave the world empty-handed to return to the dust after death. All their pride and arrogance will vanish into thin air.

There is another incident about a gentleman who once went to a cemetery during a funeral and saw an inscription on a grave that said, "*Main aham tha, yahi waham tha.*" (I was important, this was the illusion).

A successful person is one who thinks more about death than life and considers everything he receives as a gift from the Almighty.

Using life-support system, man makes great progress in this world. But he does not acknowledge the Bestower of all these blessings. As a result, he consciously or unconsciously comes to feel that he himself was the owner of the world he had created for himself. But when old age or death comes, all his glory disappears as if it had never existed.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan writes, "In the prime of his youth, a person passed away. The first time I met him, he appeared perfectly

healthy and fit. Later, he was diagnosed with cancer. Despite treatment, the disease progressed, and he became bedridden. In the final stage, he had turned into a mere skeleton. In those days, whenever someone visited him, he would say, 'Don't think about me; think about yourself. Be grateful for having a healthy body. You eat, you drink, and you walk on the ground. All these things are God's blessings. He can take away this blessing whenever He wants, and then you will be left with nothing.'

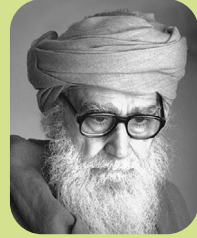
When a person receives a healthy body at birth, it appears that this healthy body belongs to him. Therefore, he takes it for granted without realizing that this healthy body was entirely a gift from God. He should acknowledge this gift; he should bow down before God. This is the test of life.

A successful person is one who thinks more about death than life and considers everything he receives as a gift from the Almighty. Such a person has succeeded in the test. On the contrary, the person who does not acknowledge God and forgets about death is the one who has failed the test. For one person, there is eternal success, and for the other, there is eternal failure." □



IN FOCUS

We bring you two articles every issue under the headings of 'Personal Experiences' and 'Journey towards God-realization' of our mentor and founder of CPS International Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021). Though he is no more with us, we feel the presence of his guiding spirit motivating us through his teachings and his advice.



Maulana, through his study of science, religion, psychology and the experiences of his own life, enlightens about the path to discovery of God through one's journey of life. A discovery of this kind involves pondering on the Word of God, converting one's material experiences into spiritual insights, constant introspection, and contemplating on the numerous phenomena of the universe.

The journey of realization begins with a questing spirit. Seeking is an intellectual journey. If a person is sincere and honest in his discovery of God, if there is no negativity in his thinking, if he is free from prejudices, if he has become a completely complex-free soul, attainment of God-realization is as certain as the dawn of light after the rising of the sun.

The greatest success in this world is to live life in such a manner that you should not have an iota of negative thought against any person. You should depart from this world with a totally positive mindset. This is my last discovery in this world.

-Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021)



THE JAPAN EXPERIENCE

IN August 1945, the USA dropped two atom bombs on Japan reducing two of its major cities to rubble. Strangely enough, the Japanese seem to bear no grudge against the Americans, for, they say, it had only reacted to Japan's violence in the arena of war. The responsibility, therefore, needs to be shared by each side. This realistic attitude on the part of the Japanese has seen them through all kinds of adversity and brought them to extraordinary heights of progress in modern times.

Both the big industrial cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, bustling with life, became enormous expanses of devastation in a matter of minutes. Within a ten-mile radius every kind of life—human, animal and vegetable was blown to bits. One and half million people died on the spot. Ten thousand of them simply disappeared. Yet, these cities have now been built up once again with wide streets, spacious houses, beautiful parks and gardens. Everything here now has a modern look. Only one ruined building has been left as it was, in order to remind one of the grim punishments meted out to them during the Second World War.

When Mr Khushwant Singh (a noted Indian journalist and an acclaimed author, d. 2014) visited Japan, he learnt, much to his astonishment, that the Japanese do not exploit the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to discredit the USA. It is the other nations, on the contrary, who have exploited the same event for this purpose. When Khushwant Singh asked the reason behind this attitude, a Japanese replied in a surprisingly calm tone:

"We hit them first at Pearl Harbour. We killed a lot of them. They warned us of what they were going to do, but we thought they were only bluffing. They beat us fair and square. We were quits, and now we are friends." (*The Hindustan Times*, April 4, 1981)

A memorial has been erected to commemorate the dead, the victims of a gruesome tragedy. In the museum are displayed photographs depicting death and destruction on a mass scale. About 70 lakh

Japanese visit Hiroshima every year to witness this spectacle. During conversation with the Japanese, however, one can sense the hidden feelings of hatred against Americans. But they do not let it rule their lives.

By virtue of such temperament, they have scaled such great heights of progress in a very short span of time. Japan owns neither petrol resources nor mineral wealth. Most of its raw materials have to be imported. Keeping all these drawbacks in view, it is most amazing that Japan has dominated world markets. This is mainly owing to the superior quality of their goods.

Mr Khushwant Singh also enquired about the prospects of the legal profession there. He was told that it was not a flourishing business. The reason being the fact that the Japanese preferred settling disputes on their own to suing in the courts. Willingness to admit faults by each party is the surest way to bring quarrels to an end. It is only when one party seeks to place the whole blame on the other side that the quarrel takes a turn for the worse. Whereas the very gesture of shouldering the blame softens up the other side, with the result that the dispute dies a natural death.

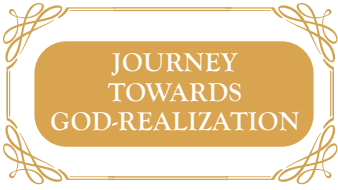
The realistic attitude on the part of the Japanese has seen them through all kinds of adversity and brought them to extraordinary heights of progress in modern times.

This realistic attitude has greatly benefited the Japanese in many respects. For instance, this makes them place their trust in one another. They thus save the time and money they would otherwise expend on lengthy legal documents. There are over 1.3 million lawyers in the USA, while there are only 23 thousand in Japan. Such legal experts are just not in demand.

Most of the commercial institutions trust in verbal understandings. Formerly, it was practised only among Japanese, but now foreign investors have also started to take advantage of this practice. Avoidance of unnecessary legal obligations invariably speeds up the work.

Essentially, such an outlook gives rise to unity. It is undoubtedly the greatest force that contributes to the success of a nation. In the words of an expert of Japanese affairs, the secret of Japan's success lies in:

"Never quarrelling amongst themselves, always doing everything together." (*The Hindustan Times*, April 1981) □



INVOKING GOD'S INFINITE MERCY

IT is only by the grace of God that one can pray, taking the great name of God. Such grace is bestowed only upon one who experiences the greatness of God before setting himself to pray. Taking the great name of God in prayers has no mystery about it. It only means that the suppliant, being a seeker after truth, has found the truth in the form of God and then his state is described in the Quran as "one who was dead, to whom We gave life, and a light whereby he could walk among people." (6: 122)

When a person of faith remembers God, he is overawed by the greatness of the Lord; he trembles at the thought of coming before Him in all His majesty. His emotion at this point involuntarily takes the form of words.

The Quran (33: 41) asks a rhetorical question about a human being who lives in the remembrance of God: "Who speaks better than one who calls to God and says, 'I am surely of those who submit.'" That is, he is one who remembers God all the time, thinks of God all the time and experiences glimpses of God at every moment. On extraordinary occasions, he gives vent to his latent spiritual feelings in a torrent of words. At that time, he starts calling on God in inspired words of a special kind. This is taking the great name of God in prayer. It is the inspiration of a righteously prepared mind.

When a person of faith remembers God, he is overawed by the greatness of the Lord; he trembles at the thought of coming before Him in all His majesty. His emotion at this point involuntarily takes the form of words. Such is the nature of remembrance of God. It is the reaction that sets in with tremendous force from within a man's heart when God enters therein. Remembrance of God is the result of discovering God Himself.

Remembrance of God is not a mere repetition of words. Rather it is a feeling that wells up from the very depths of a man's soul, a spontaneous expression of the joy and anguish that are kindled in his heart when he remembers his Lord. □

TOWARDS GLOBAL PEACE

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



PEACE IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

IN this world, for one reason or the other, peace remains elusive. Differences—political and apolitical—keep on arising between individuals and groups. Whenever people refuse to be tolerant of these differences, insisting that they be rooted out the moment they arise, there is bound to be strife. Peace, as a result, can never prevail in this world. The book *Islam and World Peace* by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is lucidly written and expansive in scope. This brief and readable book provides keen insight into peace-related topics. This book discusses at length the challenges and possibilities of communal harmony in India. The following is a condensed account of Maulana's view from the book.

CONTEXT

1. After a long struggle, the Indian subcontinent won independence in August 1947.
2. This independence was based on the 'two nation theory'. The country had been divided, ostensibly thought of as a solution to the communal conflicts.
3. Partition further exacerbated the conflict. Prior to the Partition, the conflict was between two communities, both of which lacked ruling power. With the Partition, it now became a conflict between two countries.
4. Conferences and meetings were held to resolve the issue, but no practical benefit emerged from all of this.

WHY PEACE COULDN'T PREVAIL?

1. The fundamental reason is that this issue has been thought of simply as a law-and-order problem.
2. This problem is essentially the lack of intellectual development and lack of awareness.

The solution to the religious differences is to deal it with a simple formula of "follow one, respect all". Trying to eliminate the differences is impossible and against the law of nature.

SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM

1. To educate people, to promote proper thinking and right judgement.
2. People should know how to make the distinction between actions that are efficacious and those that are not.
3. They should learn the importance of thinking before acting.
4. It is by promoting this sort of social awareness that the problem of communalism can be solved.

POINTS TO CONSIDER IN EDUCATING PEOPLE

1. The solution to the religious differences is to deal it with a simple formula of "follow one, respect all". Trying to eliminate the differences is impossible and against the law of nature.
2. The issue of cultural differences is another one that needs to be addressed in the same way. One cannot eliminate cultural differences from society. People have tried to work on this front but have failed.
3. The only workable formula is to promote among people a commitment to live and let live, of peaceful, mutual coexistence.

The above-mentioned approach calls for the re-engineering of people's minds. The opinion makers, motivational speakers, academicians, peace activists and the leaders in the society have to play a very vital role in bringing peace and harmony. Whatever be their goals, the common goal for all of us should be to maintain peace in society, which is the most basic requirement and the greatest good.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021), Padma Vibhushan awardee, dedicated his life for this cause and nurtured a team working tirelessly to promote a culture of peace. □

DEATH: THE INEVITABLE EVENT

Prepare When There is Time

EVERYONE seems to be talking non-stop, doing this and that, being busy with all sorts of things, chasing all sorts of dreams. They are all driven with the purpose of trying to fulfil unlimited desires. They want to acquire all sorts of comforts for themselves and their children. This is the mad race of materialism. But what is the result of it all? Everyone feels that their hopes have not been met, that their desires remain unfulfilled. And so, people are living in terrible despair, bitterness, tension, and frustration. They feel they have been deprived of, or denied, what they wanted. Nobody at all seems content. Their days and nights pass in this sorry predicament. Then one day, the little world of their dreams comes crashing down when death sweeps them away.

People are busy with things that belong to this temporary world, instead of preparing themselves for the eternal life after death. The life of this world is a test, and hence it is God's responsibility to provide every one of us with the things that we need to go through this test. But as far as life after death is concerned, God has not taken responsibility for it. Our life after death depends entirely on our actions in this world. There, you will reap as you have sown here, on earth. Yet, despite this, strangely, people are preoccupied doing everything possible for their life in this world and have completely forgotten the life that will come after death. In this world, if you face a shortage of something today, you can make efforts and acquire what you need tomorrow. But in the life after death, you will not have the chance of engaging in any action to make up for any shortage of your deeds on earth.

Death is the end of the pre-death period of life for the deceased, while for those who are still alive in this world, it is a reminder of their own impending death.

In this world, we have many things that enable us to survive and flourish. We have our physical bodies, for instance. We have friends and relatives. We have opportunities for work. We have money. There is an amazing life-support system all around us that is finely tuned to sustain life.

All these things are available to us in this world. Consciously or otherwise, we think that we own such things, or that they belong to us.

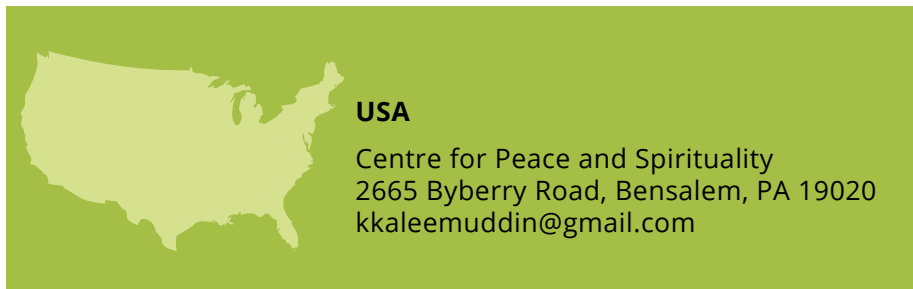
We imagine that they will remain with us forever. But after a limited span of time, each of us dies, and we are forced to leave all these things behind. We now have to travel, all alone, to an entirely different world. We are confronted with eternity before us, for which we will find that we possess absolutely nothing at all.

Besides the material things of this world, there is something else that we have—our personal status. Each of us makes efforts in whatever way we can to establish a certain position for ourselves. We acquire a status in society. We create a unique 'history' for ourselves, which comes to be seen as part of our personality.

This status or position that we establish for ourselves in this world with great effort is also only temporary. Death will suddenly steal this away as well. After we die, we will enter the next world totally bereft of our material possessions as well as the worldly stature that we had so carefully sought to cultivate while on earth.

How many of us care to be mindful of this? To be mindful of this fact, we should learn from the news of death of other people. We should take this as a very valuable learning experience. Someone else's death should lead us to be mindful of our own impending death. It should compel us to remember that we, too, will have to meet the same fate some day or the other. It should remind us to suitably prepare for our own death, which is on its way.

Death is the end of the pre-death period of life for the deceased, while for those who are still alive in this world, it is a reminder of their own impending death. When a person dies, it appears that someone who could speak has now fallen silent. But his silence is, in itself, a loud announcement to those who remain in this world. It calls out to us: "What had to happen with me has now taken place! It will happen with you, too! And so, prepare yourself for it!" ❏



THERE IS GAIN IN LOSS

A Teaching of the Quran

ONE of the teachings of the Quran is that a person ought not to grieve over what has escaped him (57:23). This is a very important principle which is essential for the building of a successful life in the present world.

The present world has been created in such a way that everyone necessarily experiences loss. No one is exempt from this, not even the prophets. This is not loss in any simple sense. It is rather a ladder to great progress. The truth is that in this world, without loss, no one can ascend the great ladders of progress. If a person is orphaned in childhood, that is apparently a huge loss. But the second aspect of it is that the deprivation of the guardian leads to self-confidence. If the father lags in economic progress, his children have a great motivation to work hard and compensate for it. They work so hard that often they earn greater success than their father.

An individual was once given agricultural land by his father but his relations, by illegal means, managed to take away this ancestral land from him. Then he left the village to work in the city. There he got a job in a factory, where he found a great opportunity to demonstrate his expertise. He gradually made progress and finally became the owner of the factory. Whatever he had lost in the agricultural field, he found with greater advantage to himself in the industrial field.

In this world there are so many opportunities that here even in loss there is some aspect of gain. Here, after losing a great deal, a person can find much more than he had before, provided he does not lose courage, and continues to make the best use of his God-given abilities.

Frustration is the loss of hope and courage and is frequently due to some temporary loss. But if a person can set his eyes on the future, he will never have this feeling of frustration, because circumstances in the world keep changing and just as the earth keeps rotating so that night becomes day, similarly opportunities arise in abundance and if one opportunity is lost, then another is immediately there to be availed of. □

In this world, after losing a great deal, a person can find much more than he had before, provided he does not lose courage, and continues to make the best use of his God-given abilities.

THE ART OF THINKING

Importance of Right Thinking

AS human beings, we have the capacity to think, in the sense that we can, at a purely intellectual level, conceptualize and discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad. Animals, on the other hand, are governed by their instincts. The ability to think and plan a course of action is unique to human beings. Animals have no need to do this and are not liable to err, for their actions are governed by their natural instincts.

Since human beings are endowed with the ability to decide on a course of action (and cannot, in reality, do otherwise), it is necessary for everyone to fully awaken their senses and train their mental faculties to the right way of thinking. Once we start thinking right, our actions will consequently be right. This article enumerates and explains some of the essentials of right thinking.

THINK POSITIVE

Right thinking is an art. Those who have learned the art can construct a successful life in this world. Those who are oblivious to it have nothing but failure in store for them.

Right thinking leads us to progress and development. Wrong thinking leads us in the opposite direction.

To put it briefly, this art can be described as 'positive thinking'. That is, keeping an open mind, so that we can rise above the psychology of reaction or retaliation and plan objectively, after having arrived at rational conclusions. If positive thinking gives us the direction to use our intellectual capacity, negative thinking acts as a check upon the development of that intellectual capacity. Those who have a tendency towards negative thinking think and plan only under the influence of external situations, which may or

may not be particularly good. Right thinking leads us to progress and development. Wrong thinking leads us in the opposite direction.

Humans are social beings. We cannot survive by ourselves. We need each other to sustain our needs. We are all, in one way or the other, indispensable to each other. In such a situation, reacting negatively is never beneficial. Success will come only to those who respond positively, even in negative situations.

DISCOVER BY THINKING

It is a fact that all our activities are governed by our minds. We first think, then act. If we think right, our actions are right. If we do not think right, our actions will not be right. Right thinking leads to making the right beginnings, and the right beginnings lead to the right results. When an apple falls from a tree, it always falls straight down. This has been so since the beginning of time. But people took this falling of apples for granted. They probably felt that there was nothing to it to think about. What was happening was what should be happening. No one thought about questioning this incident.

Sir Isaac Newton, as the story goes, was probably the first person to think about this phenomenon. Why did the apple fall to the ground? Why did not it go up? Unusual thoughts, but they helped Newton arrive at the conclusion that the Earth exerted a force on the apple. He proceeded to discover the laws of gravity.

In a similar way, for centuries, people believed that the Earth was flat. This theory appeared to be true as far as anyone could see. Therefore, it was held to be an established fact. Standing on the coast, if you watch the horizon for ships, you will first see the masts of any ship. As the ship comes closer, the mast rises until the entire ship is visible. The ship seems to have risen from below the horizon. Think about this phenomenon.

If the Earth was flat, the entire ship would have appeared in the distance. The entire ship would have been visible as a speck on the horizon that became clearer as the ship came closer. But only the masts of the ships were visible at first. The Earth is obviously not flat, as we can see for ourselves. This is how the ancient Greeks learnt that the Earth is not flat.

The truth is that all discoveries are made solely by thinking. They are not things that you stumble upon. Think, and you will discover the answers to everything.

All discoveries are made solely by thinking. They are not things that you stumble upon. Think, and you will discover the answers to everything.

LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

Another important principle of right thinking concerns our ability to control our minds. This enables us to derive lessons from the various incidents we experience. The readiness to learn lessons from our

experiences, and those of others, helps us in intellectual development and saves us from unnecessary loss.

Life is a series of experiences. If our eyes and ears are open and receptive, we can always derive useful lessons from them. These lessons enable us to construct our lives better. Acquire a receptive and open mind, and develop the ability to learn from experience, both your own, and that of others.

DISTINGUISH

An important aspect of the art of thinking is to be able to distinguish between things which, on the surface, appear to be similar, but on a deeper level, are radically different. There are a number of things in this world which fall into this category, and our failure to understand the difference often results in great loss.

Instead of wasting your time being provoked into fighting, you should stick to the path of positive action and avoid negative action.

At every point in our lives, we are faced with a choice—between courses of action; between opinions; between ideas. This can be related to all matters in our daily life. We must refrain from forming opinions due to apparent or partial similarities. We must clearly analyze the difference between things and then form our opinions. Anyone who fails to comprehend this wisdom is like a driver who fails to differentiate between an empty street and a street full of traffic.

ADJUST

We are all born idealists. We constantly seek higher ideals, the highest and best in all spheres. This idealistic approach sounds good in theory but is destructive in the long run. The reason is that we do not live our lives alone. Everyone's interests, considerations and choices vary. Everyone has a personal, unique view of what is good, bad, and ideal. Owing to this state of affairs, the achievement of the personal ideal is impossible. The only practical solution is to adopt the policy of adjustment with others. We must avoid all friction by ignoring obvious provocation, for trouble avoided is trouble averted.

IGNORE PROVOCATION

Conflicts and quarrels have always been a feature of human society. That is not to say that there is no escape from this deplorable situation.

It depends solely upon the concerned individuals whether they entangle themselves in such conflicts or manage to keep themselves free. This holds true for individuals as well as for nations.

Most quarrels start with verbal exchanges that grow heated. People overreact and become hostile to each other. Their retaliatory thinking often results in full-fledged enmity. Negative action is the result of negative thinking.

Negative activities should be countered in a positive manner. The best principle to follow is that whenever you encounter an unpleasant situation, think carefully before speaking or acting. Verbal exchanges can snowball into more serious conflicts. If something poses a real threat, it must be taken seriously. You should make every effort to solve the problem at hand but confine yourself to resolving it by discussing it. Even if your feelings are hurt, there is no real harm, only imaginary harm. And reacting on imaginary grounds would not be wise. Learn to exercise restraint and ignore provocation.

It is our level of thinking which determines success or failure. Success is the result of right thinking. Think right, do right, and succeed.

THINK OUT OF THE BOX

To think out of the box is to think differently, unconventionally, and from new perspectives. You are not limited to thinking in terms of black and white. There are grey areas in between. Better options exist. And thinking out of the box will lead you to these better options. For instance, if someone says something hurtful to us, we tend to become angry and quarrel with the person responsible. We sometimes feel that if we do not react to the insult, it shows cowardice, while fighting back would be considered brave.

But this is the result of wrong thinking. The truth is that in this situation, there is a better option—the way of avoidance. Instead of wasting your time being provoked into fighting, you should stick to the path of positive action and avoid negative reaction. There is a saying that illustrates this better option—“Dogs may bark, but the elephant goes on.”

This is not just a matter of morality. It is in fact an important part of life's reality. There are different types of people in this world. That is why we are confronted with unpleasant experiences. If we are provoked by every unpleasant experience, we will fail to devote ourselves to any worthwhile goal. Time and resources in this world are limited. We

cannot afford to spend these precious things on 'teaching someone a lesson', or on retaliation, or other such negative actions. The price we pay for these futile engagements is our own progress and development.

HOLD YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE

We are not machines controlled by some sort of system, nor are we animals, governed only by instincts. We enjoy freedom. We make decisions and act of our own free will. The question is how to make sure we make the right decisions and take the right action.

History shows the ineffectiveness of all worldly measures in this connection—whether social pressure, law enforcement or reformation. It is not possible for people on their own to bind themselves to moral values or to adhere to justice. This is possible only when they are convinced that they are under a watchful gaze of a superpower—a living and powerful God who is perfect and just.

The concept of a living and powerful God is necessarily accompanied by the concept of accountability. God is just, and everyone will answer to Him for their actions. We will answer to Him for our actions. This guarantees that we think right and do right. This, in turn, gives us the conviction that we will receive God's eternal reward if we always think right, and do right.

The truth of the matter is that it is our level of thinking which determines success or failure. Success is the result of right thinking. Think right, do right, and succeed. □



THE RICHEST OF THE RICH IS ONE
WHO IS NOT A PRISONER TO GREED

IMAM ALI

FIGHTING FRUSTRATION

Where There is a Will

A Muslim girl suffered the frustration of being denied modern school education by an overly religious-minded father who refused to send her to a convent school. She was particularly keen on learning English, and rather than waste her time brooding over the fact that certain avenues were now closed to her, she began studying on her own. By dint of constant effort, she became proficient enough in the language to appear for the matriculation examination as a private candidate.

Unfortunately, she failed in one subject at her first attempt, but this did not make her lose heart. It had the effect rather of making her work even harder than before and the following year, she passed the examination with flying colours. She continued her studies in this way with whatever little help she could get in the vicinity and, after successfully passing the pre-university examination, she did her B.A. (Hons) in English and then went on to do her M.A.

Still, she did not feel satisfied with her prowess, for even though she had a university degree to her credit, she had somehow not really developed her skills in writing English to any high degree. It seemed impossible to do this without the help of an able teacher, but she remembered the saying: 'where there's a will, there's a way!' And she did not lose heart. The strong and unshaken belief that God helps those who help themselves did not fail her. During her struggles, she chanced upon

We may find that some doors are locked along the way, but there are always others that remain open, and it is just a question of entering the right one to reach our destination.

a book published in London, which seemed to solve the problem of not being able to have a teacher. The author, an Englishman, advised foreigners who were interested in learning English, to practise writing with the help of a good book, where no teacher was available. They were first to translate selected passages from the book into their own mother tongue. This book was not to be referred to again until these passages had been translated back into English by the students.

Then a comparison was to be made with the original. Corrections made, and the correction committed to memory. Recognizing the value of this technique, she put it into practice over a period of two years, selecting passages from books and magazines with a wide range of topics,

vocabulary, and styles. This approach proved so successful that she could not only handle all her correspondence independently but could even write persuasively on topics of general interest for newspapers and magazines. Her skills also made her of great assistance to her brother in his export business.

The technique she employed is one that can be applied to the learning of any foreign language. So, there are many different avenues which can take us to the top. We may find that some doors are locked along the way, but there are always others that remain open, and it is just a question of entering the right one to reach our destination.

In the world of today, success lies within the grasp of those who are alert to the opportunities around them. Failure is the result not so much of lack of opportunities but the lack of will to grasp such opportunities as exist, and to pursue one's course with determination and energy. □



What is the meaning of Hadith?

The sayings of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.
(It includes his sermons, utterances, discussions, letters, habits, actions, and even his approval or disapproval of actions performed before him.

These were preserved word for word by the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ).

THE MESSAGE AND MEANING OF *HAJJ*

God-oriented Life

THE significance and message of the pilgrimage (*Hajj*) is for man to turn towards God, making God the central focus of his life. Although *Hajj* lasts for just a few days, the lessons it provides have a much broader significance. *Hajj* is a comprehensive guide for the entirety of one's life.

When we take leave of our homes and families and set off for *Hajj*, we feel as if we are journeying towards God. It feels like we have left our world and are entering the world of God. We feel we are heading towards the House of God, to the abode and working place of God's Prophet and his Companions—to the historically significant places of people who had devoted their entire lives for the sake of God, and who gave their lives in God's path. With this, the pilgrim also realizes the fact that he is setting off for that place which God specially chose to reveal his final guidance to humankind.

In this manner, *Hajj* helps the pilgrim to become a God-oriented person. He remembers God. His mind is filled with thoughts of God. If earlier he used to think principally about himself, now he thinks mainly or wholly of God.

A person's psyche is moulded in accordance with his thoughts. If we think about and act only for ourselves, we become self-centred. But when we set off towards God, our mind turns towards Him. We begin to think of God. We now remember that it was God who created us; that it is God who gave us so many different opportunities; that it was He who made us capable of doing many things in this world; that it was because of His blessings that we are able to journey towards His house.

We also become aware that, finally, the day will dawn when we die, after which we will have to directly appear in His court. All this turns the pilgrim's journey into a truly spiritual one. Although *Hajj* is in the form of a physical journey, due to its internal spirit it becomes a meaningful one that leads the pilgrim to a lofty stage.

As the *Haji*, or pilgrim, reaches a particular place close to the place of pilgrimage he calls out the following words: "God is the Greatest! God is the Greatest! There is none worthy of worship other than Him! And God is the Greatest! God is the Greatest! And all praise is for Him!"

By constantly repeating these words, a consciousness develops in a *Haji* (*Hajj* pilgrim) that all greatness is for God alone. In comparison to

God, everything else pales into complete insignificance. The greatness of everything else is only so that it can be drowned or surrendered in this greatest of all glory—the glory of God. This is the real secret of social consciousness. You cannot have unity and harmonious collective living where everyone thinks that they are greater than the others. On the other hand, when everyone surrenders their sense of individual greatness, you will find unity and harmony. People can live harmoniously together only when everyone surrenders their sense of greatness before a single being.

When people from different parts of the world arrive close to the place of pilgrimage, they remove their distinctive dress and don the same sort of simple, unstitched white clothes—a uniform known as *ihram*. This symbolizes that they have now entered a new world. By removing their national costume or personal dress, it is as if they are shedding the lifestyles that they had been conditioned into. They are now stirred by a powerful God-consciousness, being dyed in the hue of God.

Putting simple clothes on their bodies, the pilgrims begin to utter divine words: *Labbaik! Allahuma Labbaik!* It means: 'Here I am at Your service! Here I am at Your service!' They cry out, as if God had called them and they are rushing towards Him. The cries of *Labbaik! Labbaik!* 'Here I am at Your service! Here I am at Your service!' resound continuously from the pilgrims all around. When the pilgrim cries, *Labbaik!* 'Here I am!' he doesn't mean to say that he has come to settle in Makkah.

It isn't a declaration of his having left his homeland and arriving in Makkah. Rather, it is a declaration of having left his previous conduct or behaviour. It is an announcement to say that 'I am here with a complete willingness to obey You (God) and do whatever You (God) command. To submit my life and soul to Your command.' Although the pilgrim declares, *Labbaik*, 'Here I am at Your service!' at the place of *Hajj*; he must stand by this declaration in practice in his personal life on his return from *Hajj* too.

On reaching Makkah, the first thing that the pilgrim does is to circumambulate the *Kabah*. This is an important ritual of *Hajj* known as *tawaf*. The *Kabah* is a historical structure originally built by the Prophet Abraham in the centre of a large courtyard. *Kabah* is also called the House of God. In the courtyard, the pilgrims go around the *Kabah* seven times, symbolizing their willingness to have God as the centre of their lives. They affirm that they will consider God as the focus around which their lives will revolve. It is as if scattered bits of iron are being pulled towards a divine magnet.

The *tawaf* is symbolic of making all of one's efforts constrained to a single focus. This is akin to our solar system, where all the planets revolve around a single sun, the axis around which they whirl. In the same way, *Hajj* teaches us to lead God-centric lives, to make God the focus of every aspect of our lives and to spend our lives according to His will. This is the same with all the other rituals of *Hajj*. Thus, in different ways, all rituals of *Hajj* have the same symbolic significance of a God-conscious life.

Believers all over the world turn towards the *Kabah* every day, offering their five daily prayers. Ordinarily, this is just a notion in the minds of people, but when they gather during *Hajj*, it becomes an astounding reality. When believers from all over the world pray together facing the *Kabah*, they experience an amazing sense of unity when they realize that they are facing the same *Kabah* of the believers of the whole world.

Tawaf, i.e., the orderly circumambulation of the *Kabah* provides the pilgrims another invaluable lesson—of working together, of doing things together and in harmony. Here, differences between rulers and subjects are wiped off completely, as are ethnic differences. It is as if every single person has just one status: as a servant of the one God. At this time, they have no other status but this.

After the *tawaf*, the pilgrim runs seven times between the hillocks of *Safa* and *Marwah*. This too, is a symbolic declaration—an expression of the pilgrim's determination to devote all of himself to God's path. This running between the two hillocks is not simply a mere physical act. In the form of repetition of a historical act, it stands for the pilgrim's willingness to spend his whole life running in God's path. It is symbolic of making all activities throughout one's life to be contained within certain boundaries. If our activities are not bound or regulated in this manner, it would lead to chaos. Such regulation is necessary for a well-ordered life.

One of the most important acts of worship during *Hajj* is the heading to and staying in the plains of Arafat. This presents a truly astonishing sight. Vast numbers of people, from across the world, assemble here, wearing the same simple clothes and uttering the same words, 'Here I am at Thy service O Lord, here I am.' It is a worldly rehearsal of the Day of Judgement, when all people will be brought before God. It is a reminder of the great truth that one day we will all have to stand before God, accountable for all our actions.

If one realizes this significance of the assembly at Arafat, one's life can be totally transformed. It is as if all the differences among human

beings have suddenly vanished, and that, setting aside all their conflicts, they have surrendered themselves to the one God. It is as if they have all become one, just as their God is one. Despite their differences of language, colour, status, and gender, they have become identical and one. Different nationalities, it appears, have all turned into one single nation or community. *Hajj* is a glorious and unparalleled expression of human unity and collectiveness. One cannot find anything similar elsewhere in the world.

Another part of the rituals of *Hajj* is the collection of pebbles for stoning of the *Jamarat*. It symbolizes preparation for warding off the evil whispers of the devil. By stoning the *Jamarat*, the pilgrim refreshes his determination to repel evil and cause the devil to flee from him. He announces his enmity against, and opposition to, the devil. If one converts this symbolic act into actual practice, one can truly expel all evil and negativity from oneself.

Following this, the pilgrim sacrifices an animal in God's path. In the Quran, it is included in the divine symbols. Sacrificing an animal denotes sacrificing one's own self. By sacrificing an animal, the pilgrim symbolizes his willingness to sacrifice everything in God's path, including even his own life if need be. He expresses, thereby, his commitment to offer his everything for God's sake.

Although the rituals of *Hajj* are completed in Makkah, many pilgrims go to Madinah after finishing their *Hajj*. The ancient name for Madinah is Yathrib. Towards the end of his life, the Prophet of Islam made it his centre, and that is why it came to be known as *Madinat-un-Nabi* or 'The City of the Prophet'. Madinah is a short form of this term.

In Madinah is a mosque built by the Prophet Muhammad, where his grave is also located. Here also one finds the footprints of his prophetic life. When pilgrims arrive in Madinah, they are reminded once again of the collective unity of humankind despite its diversity. The mosque of the Prophet reminds them that their one true guide is the same Prophet. They return from here with the feeling that despite their geographical or national differences, they must follow the same path, the one shown by the Prophet. This is another powerful symbol of their unity. They return from Madinah inspired by the understanding that no matter what their differences—of nation, ethnicity and so on—they must all walk on the path of their same Prophet, that they must take as their guide the same blessed figure, and that their God is the One God. □

SUPERIOR MORALITY

Love Thy Neighbours

SUPERIOR morality is the highest form of morality. It means consistently adhering to good ethics in every situation, regardless of experiencing negative behaviour from others. Superior morality is not based on the reactions of others, but rather on one's own higher principles and standards. In Islam, morality is considered a form of worship, not a reciprocal human behaviour. A saying of the Prophet Muhammad is: "Do not be reciprocators (or imitators) who say, 'If people do good, we will do good, and if they do wrong, we will do wrong.' Rather, prepare yourselves so that even if people mistreat you, you will still treat them well." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*) This means not becoming like those who only respond to others based on how they are treated. Instead, prepare yourself to treat others well even if they mistreat you.

In Islam, the reward for worship increases with the addition of qualitative factors. Similarly, when a person continues to exhibit good behaviour towards others despite experiencing negative treatment, their reward also increases. This is because they have reached a level where they prioritize the principles of good character over their own emotions. Sacrificing one's emotions can be seen as sacrificing one's ego, which is a significant sacrifice.

In normal situations, good character is simply considered as social manners. However, in extreme situations, exhibiting good character becomes a supreme form of worship. In normal situations, the display of good character does not necessarily contribute to the advancement of one's personality. However, when a person remains unaffected by the negative behaviour of others in extreme situations and continues to uphold good character, this approach becomes a means of personal growth.

When a person remains unaffected by the negative behaviour of others in extreme situations and continues to uphold good character, this approach becomes a means of personal growth.

Regarding good morality, the Bible (*Matthew 22: 39*) states, "Love your neighbour as yourself." The greatest opportunity for a person in terms of morality lies in their relationship with their neighbours. A neighbour is the closest companion to an individual. After the members of one's own household, the people one encounters first are their neighbours.

Maintaining a good relationship with them and treating them well is an important aspect of a person's true character. Whether the neighbour belongs to the same religion or a different one, whether they are from one's own community or another, they should always be considered and treated with respect. Their rights should be fulfilled in accordance with the demands of humanity. The Prophet Muhammad said, "Verily, they are not believers; verily, they are not believers; verily, they are not believers." It was asked, "Who, O Messenger of God?" He said, "Those whose neighbours are not safe from their mischief."

The Prophet Muhammad said, "Verily, they are not believers; verily, they are not believers; verily, they are not believers." It was asked, "Who, O Messenger of God?" He said, "Those whose neighbours are not safe from their mischief."

According to this *Hadith*, if Muslims mistreat their neighbour and cause them distress, it raises doubts about their faith and Islam itself. The instructions regarding neighbours in religious teachings indicate that a sincere person should unilaterally observe the rights of their neighbour. They should strive to treat them with kindness, disregarding any negative behaviour from them. A person's humanity and the manifestation of their religious sentiments are first tested in their

relationship with their neighbours. The neighbour is the identification of whether there is a human sentiment within an individual or not.

If a person's neighbour is happy with him, it can be understood that he is a righteous person. Conversely, if the neighbour is unhappy with him, it is evidence that he is not a righteous person. Being a good neighbour is proof of being a good human being. God will include such individuals in His blessings. □



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CHILDREN'S CORNER

Name of the book: My First Quran Storybook

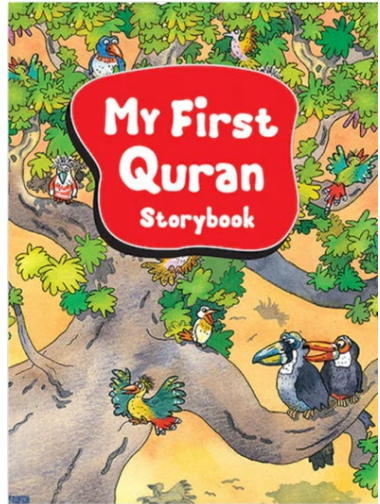
Author's Name: Dr Saniyasnain Khan

Pages: 320

ISBN: 9788178985541

Available in English and Arabic

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Saniyasnain Khan is a children's author, with over 100 children's books to his credit. He hopes that his books will be a true companion on the path of spiritual development and will help children to know the true purpose and meaning of life. The author can be reached at: skhan@goodwordbooks.com. Here is a selection from the book.

THE STORY OF MARYAM

Like all the stories told in the Quran, this is also a true story. It begins even before Maryam, or Mary, was born.

Long long ago there lived a pious lady in Jerusalem. Her name was Hannah, and her husband was Imran. She prayed to Allah for a child and vowed that the child would spend her life serving Allah. Allah heard her prayers, and she gave birth to a beautiful baby girl who was named Maryam (Mary). When she gave birth to Maryam, she felt sad and said: "O my Lord! I have given birth to a female."

For only a male child could do priestly work. It had always been so. But Allah graciously accepted the girl-child and caused her to grow up in purity. When Maryam began serving Allah (as promised by her mother), the priests so admired her deep respect for Allah, that every one of them felt it would be an honour to be her guardian.

Sometimes her uncle would go and meet Maryam. Every time he went to her little room, he saw that there was fresh food. One day he asked: "Maryam, how do you get fresh food and fresh water?" Maryam simply answered: "It is from Allah. He gives in plenty to whom He wishes."

One day she was alone in her room. Suddenly an unknown man who was actually an angel, appeared before her. She became afraid. But the man said: "Do not be afraid. I am Allah's messenger. You will have a holy son." Maryam panicked. She asked the angel: "How can I have a son?" The angel said: "Allah says, 'This is easy for Me. Your son will be a blessing for humankind. And he will be a sign from Allah. His name will be Isa ibn Maryam.'"

Maryam left Jerusalem. She walked till she reached a faraway place. She was tired and hot. She saw a palm tree. She sat in its shade. A stream was flowing nearby.

It was here, in the shade of a date palm and next to a stream, that the Prophet Isa (Jesus) was born. Maryam heard a voice: "Have some dates. Drink water. Then take your baby and go back to your own people. But do not speak. Keep silent. If people ask you why you don't speak, tell them that you promised Allah to keep silence." Maryam picked up little Isa and went to her own village. People asked her: "Whose baby is this?" But she kept silent as Allah told her to.

Suddenly little Isa said: "I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the Book and made me a prophet. His blessing is upon me wherever I go, and He has commanded me to be steadfast in prayer and give alms

to the poor as long as I shall live. He has made me kind and dutiful towards my mother. He has rid me of arrogance and wickedness. I was blessed on the day I was born, and blessed I shall be on the day of my death; and may peace be upon me on the day when I shall be raised to life."

People were amazed to hear the little baby speak. But why should they be surprised? The Prophet Isa's birth was a miracle. And Allah gave the Prophet Isa all power to perform many miracles during his life. The Quran says: "Such was Isa, son of Maryam." He was a great prophet and he taught people how to love Allah. □

Have you seen him who has taken his own desire to be his god?

(The QURAN 25: 43)

The Prophet once said, 'Among all the deities besides God being worshipped under the sky, the most serious before God is that desire which is followed.'
(Al-Mojam Al Kabir lit-Tabrani)

It is a fact that the greatest object of worship is the ignoble desire of man.

THE AGE OF TECHNOLOGY AND THE QURAN

A CPS International Initiative



*This article is written by Mohammad Usman. He is the sub-editor of **Spirit of Islam (SOI)**. He has been associated with **SOI** since 2015. He proofreads, edits, translates, and writes for **SOI**. The intersection between language and technology is his area of special interest. His passion has found expression through many initiatives of CPS International, New Delhi. He has been closely working with dedicated members of CPS International to bring into fruition the technological developments mentioned in this article. ~Fathima Sarah (Publisher)*

IN the Introduction of his English translation of the Quran, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan writes: 'The Quran is a book of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. It did not come to him in the form of a complete book, but in parts over a period of 23 years. (...) Whenever any part of the Quran was revealed, it was written down on papyrus (a type of paper), or in Arabic, *qirtas* (6: 7). During this process, people committed the verses to memory. (...) The writing of the Quran by hand continued till the printing press was invented and paper began to be manufactured on a large scale, thanks to the industrial revolution.'

The world has become aware of Islam and the Quran as these are directly connected to World Peace. Therefore, it is the duty of believers to make the Quran available to the world at large in a manner and in a language that is understandable.

The 21st century brought with it newer modes of learning from the books. Now, it was not enough just to print a book or make its translations available. Wireless connectivity and internet have revolutionized the field of books. In an age where human beings find themselves pressed for time and always on the go, audio books emerged which the busy person could listen to while travelling. To lighten the cumbersome load of carrying bulky books in your bags, e-books were invented. To ease the strain from your eyes, and to read some particular passages from a book without troubling to leaf through its pages, you can now just command your Voice Assistant device to read a particular passage.

The latest and most thrilling addition to this list is Artificial Intelligence-supported GPT. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is described as the theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages. ChatGPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer) is an AI chatbot that uses natural language processing to create humanlike conversational dialogue. The language model can respond to questions and compose various written content, including articles, social media posts, essays, code, and emails.

Among many of its uses, ChatGPT is being used to convert any book into a dialogue or conversation form. Instead of searching through a book for a particular passage, ChatGPT user may direct a question to ChatGPT and get an answer in a form and language he desires. Sensing the great importance that ChatGPT has, CPS International, New Delhi has taken cognizance of this development and developed a WhatsApp-integrated chatbot that is based on Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's English translation and commentary of the Quran as well as other English works. This chatbot is named as *Spiritual Message*. You may ask a question on any topic related to the Quran, spirituality, peace, art of life, biography of the Prophet, and the *Spiritual Message* chatbot will provide valuable lessons from these sources.

Maulana wrote in his Introduction of the Quran translation: 'One special aspect of the Quran is that at any moment its reader can consult its Writer, put his questions, and receive answers, for the Writer of the Quran is God Himself. He is a living God. As man's Creator, He directly hears and answers man's call.'

CPS International is doing its best to make the Quran available to entire humanity and in a way so that everyone has access to the message of the Quran. The English translation of the Quran along with supporting literature has been made available on the following platforms:

Audio Files of the English translation of the Quran on AUDIBLE:

[AUDIBLE LINK](#)

Spiritual Message podcast on SPOTIFY:

[Spiritual Message Podcast Link](#)

Audio Files of the English translation of the Quran on SPOTIFY:

[Quran in English Link](#)

Audio Files of the English books of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan on SPOTIFY:

[Maulana's English Audiobooks](#)

Audio Files of the Urdu books of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan on SPOTIFY:

[Maulana's Urdu Audiobooks](#)

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's Lectures on SPOTIFY:

[Maulana's Lectures](#)

The Quran Player on Amazon Voice Assistant Alexa:

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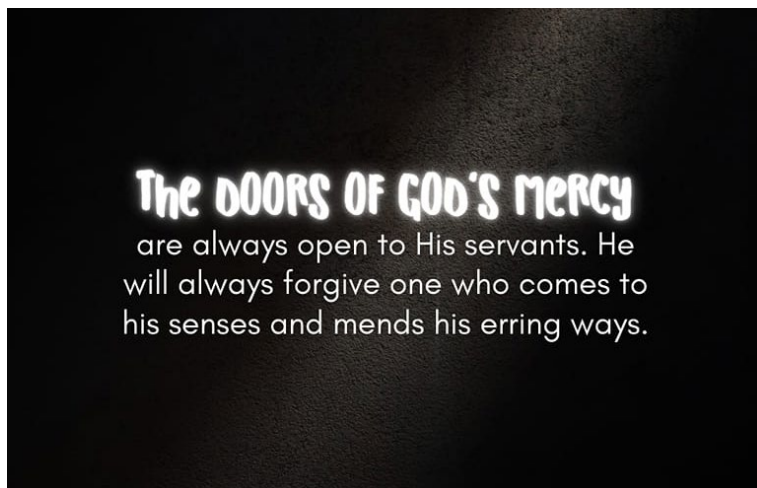
The Quran Speaker on Google Voice Assistant:

[The Quran Speaker on Google Voice Assistant](#)

Spirit of Islam, Al-Risala (Urdu, Hindi) magazines on Magzter:

[Magazines on Magzter](#)

Maulana had written, 'Today anyone can find a beautiful copy of the Quran, wherever he might be, in any part of the globe.' Now, CPS International can add that anyone can find the message of the Quran on a relevant topic, in any form and in any of the latest technology this age offers. □



INTERVIEW WITH MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

Tabish Mehdi (b.1951) is an Urdu poet and critic. He published the Urdu book Mera Mutal'a in 1995 which carries answers by some noted Muslim scholars to a set of questions. We are publishing English translation of the question-and-answer section of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan.

What importance do you give to reading in human life?

The importance of reading in human life is extremely fundamental. If food is necessary for physical existence, then reading is necessary for mental existence. The perfection of human personality is not possible without reading.

When and how did the passion for reading arise within you?

The family I was born into already had a tradition of reading, especially literary study. Therefore, the passion for reading arose within me since childhood. However, my passion for reading in a disciplined manner emerged when I read a book by Sir James Jeans (1877-1946). This book opened up a whole new world of reading before me.

What has been your purpose of reading?

The purpose of my reading is primarily twofold: to understand Islam through its original sources and the classical Islamic scholars, and secondly, to directly learn about the modern intellectual challenges facing Islam. Then, in the light of this study, to write books on the introduction of Islam and to address and answer modern intellectual challenges to Islam.

What type of books did you start reading for your study?

Initially, I mostly read literary books. After that, as a result of the education at the religious seminary, I started reading Islamic books. And then, I started reading books related to modern atheism.

What is the pace of your reading?

My reading and writing both go hand in hand. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the pace of my reading in terms of quantity. I just keep reading day and night. And during reading, when a topic comes to my mind, I write it down.

Which languages do you read books in for your study?

Generally, I read books in Arabic, English, and Urdu. Sometimes, I also read books or articles in Persian and Hindi.

What is the time of your reading?

There is no fixed time for my study. I devote all my time to reading. Reading is my mental nourishment.

What kind of mental and intellectual state did you experience during the early stages of your study?

Initially, reading was synonymous with mental recreation for me. Later, it became synonymous with the pursuit of truth. Now, reading is a means for me to serve Islam.

What are the top-tier books in your field of interest?

I find many books to be top-tier as historical sources in their respective subjects. For example, among the commentaries of the Quran, there is *Al-Jami' li-Ahkam al-Quran* by Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Abu Bakr al-Qurtubi (d. 1273), among *Hadith* commentaries, there is *Fath-ul-Bari* by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 1449), among the biographies of the Prophet Muhammad, there's *Seerat-un-Nabi* by ibn Kathir, and so on. For understanding modern thought, there is Bertrand Russell's (1872-1970) *Human Knowledge*. However, I have not come across any top-tier books that present Islam in a scientific manner and at a modern intellectual level.

Have you had the opportunity to conduct comparative studies on any subject?

Specifically, I have conducted comparative studies on various religions.

What do you consider essential in a comparative study?

Two necessary conditions for a successful comparative study are in-depth study and objectivity.

What do you consider essential in research and investigation?

For scientific research, it is essential to read the primary sources on the subject and to do so with an unbiased mind.

What do authors need to consider in their reading?

An author's work should be a result of their reading. Writing should not be the motivation for reading.

What is your approach to reading?

I am interested in knowledge. I read any book that is written in an academic manner.

How do you preserve the knowledge gained from your studies?

To preserve the knowledge gained from my studies, I practise the formula 'preserve knowledge through writing it down'. No matter how good one's memory is, it can never replace a book.

Do you mark important sentences or paragraphs in books during your reading?

If it is my personal book, I do mark important points during my study.

What type of books do you read during your travels?

During travels, I mostly read light materials such as newspapers or magazines.

Do you engage in leisure reading or reading for passing the time? If so, to what extent?

Leisure reading or reading to pass the time is acceptable for someone who cannot engage in serious study.

What are your favourite topics? List them in order of preference.

My favourite topics are all Islamic topics and all topics opposing Islam.

Who are your favourite authors? Explain why you like them.

No modern Muslim author is my favourite, as I believe none of them have adopted the modern scientific approach.

Which author has influenced you the most?

My natural sensibility has influenced me the most. The greatest book for me is the book of nature.

Who are your favourite fiction writers and poets? Why do you prefer them over others?

I do not have any favourite fiction writer or poet.

Do you buy books to read, or do you borrow them from others and libraries?

I buy books as much as I can, I borrow them from others or libraries as well.

Do you have a personal library? How do you maintain it?

I do have a personal library. To maintain it, I ensure that each book is placed in its designated spot.

Any particular experience related to your reading?

My experience in reading is to focus more on reading than writing. Personally, my writing is a by-product of my reading.

Any advice or suggestion for bibliophiles?

All great books are written in a serious academic idiom. Therefore, to make reading fruitful, it is essential to develop a taste for serious study. Reading superficial things creates a superficial temperament, while reading serious topics nurtures deep thinking. The purpose of study is not only to increase knowledge but also to enhance insight. Therefore, it is said that ten parts of intellect are required for one part of knowledge. Insight is essential for truly benefiting from knowledge. □

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CPS NEWSLETTER

CPS INTERNATIONAL PEACE CONFERENCE

A Report by Mohammad Usman (sub-editor SOI)

“Humiliation in obedience is far better than honour and prestige in disobedience.” These moving words were uttered by Dr Rajat Malhotra during the welcome speech of CPS International Peace Conference. The Peace Conference was held at The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, New Delhi from April 29-30, 2023. CPS members from across India and from many countries participated in the conference to renew their pledge to carry forward the legacy of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan’s peaceful and universal message derived from the Quran and the exemplary model of the Prophet Muhammad. The conference had long been in the planning. Originally planned as a biennial event, and being held since 2012, the coronavirus pandemic halted the continuation. This also marked the first CPS International Conference after the demise of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan in 2021.

The conference was opened by award-winning children’s author Dr Saniyasnain Khan followed by Dr Rajat Malhotra’s welcome note. Both emphasized on the unity of the team, staying true to the core values of CPS mission which are peace and spirituality, and introducing the peaceful message of the Word of God, i.e., the Quran. Prof Farida Khanam, the chairperson of the CPS International, in her talk mentioned and acknowledged the role of all those people who had played important role in the journey of the CPS mission which had started in the 1970s. A panel discussion between Islamic scholars discussed the importance, means and the purposes of God-realization and peaceful coexistence.

It is mentioned in the Quran: The recitation (of the Quran) at dawn is indeed witnessed. (17: 78) Explaining this verse, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan writes: ‘People have always believed that morning time is the best time because one’s mind is most fresh at this time of the day. Several research corroborate to the fact that morning is the most productive time of the day. Therefore, one prayer should be said in the morning, the special feature of which should be a longer recitation from the Quran.’ Keeping this special mention in the Quran in mind, the *Fajr* (dawn) prayer was followed by a Quran lecture.

A major feature of the conference was Dr Mattias Dahlkvist's lecture on the relevance of the works of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan in today's times. Based in Sweden, he is a senior lecturer in religious studies. He has done a lot of research work on Maulana's works and thoughts. He has visited the CPS International office many times to interview Maulana. His talk was very insightful, and he also obliged the audience by answering many of their questions.

The age of technology has taken a revolutionary turn with the advent of Artificial Intelligence. The launch of GPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer) has entirely and essentially altered the way we create texts. Various GPT-based chatbots have come up. Many chatbots have been designed based on the Bible, the Gita and other Hebrew texts. Keeping abreast with the latest trends, CPS has a dedicated team that has designed a WhatsApp-integrated chatbot based on the English translation and commentary of the Quran as well as other works of Maulana. A prototype of this chatbot, named ***Spiritual Message*** was introduced in the conference.

Highlight of the conference was the participation by women members of the CPS International. They shared their learnings and their strivings in practising and introducing the peaceful message of Islam. Braving many odds, they have contributed greatly to the CPS mission. All sessions were interspersed with many short videos of Maulana. About these videos, a participant observed: Selection of Maulana's videos couldn't have been better, feeling like Maulana was addressing the team live saying the most appropriate words to the occasion!!! (~Sajid Anwar, CPS UAE Team)

An English book *Living in God's Glory* and other booklets by Maulana were launched. The two-day conference concluded with *dua* (supplication).

The following is a list of YouTube links for different sessions of the Peace Conference.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z94aS7nevw0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsD04dOvGeE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWMy2u1iAEg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrP-HOSml6E>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SjTa1qYUR0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfTBajRastM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzv3vK9HorU>

The participants of the conference were very appreciative of how the whole affair was conducted and of the many learnings they took home. Here are some of their responses:

It was the first conference conducted in the absence of Maulana. There might have been many apprehensions about it. However, it was successful beyond anyone's expectation. It happened definitely through tireless efforts and preparations by entire Delhi team, and by the help of God. We thank God and Delhi team for conducting such a wonderful conference to review and ignite the ***I will do it spirit*** in all of us. May God accept our efforts and give strength to stand for the mission of introducing the peaceful message of Islam and to take forward Maulana's legacy. ~***Raichur CPS Team***

Alhamdulillah the programme was very good. The members of the mission played their best role, may Allah accept it. Thanks to Farida aapa, Dr Saniyasnain Khan, Dr Rajat Malhotra and all the members of the Delhi team. The panel of Islamic scholars expressed their opinions and impressions during the discussion. Electronic media is a great blessing in the modern era. It seems that Maulana's teachings had been saved along with his personality. The online address by Maulana is still going on. While the Almighty God has protected the text of the Quran, he has preserved the words of Maulana as a living record for the correct interpretation of Islam. It became apparent in the conference that the guidance Maulana gave us is still relevant. The CPS teams have made God-realization and introducing the Word of God their goal and mission. When there is so much clarity, and the task is agreed upon and the action plan is clear, God willing, no temporal or spatial alteration will affect the desired goal. A divine mission following the principles that God has laid down, will find that God is protecting and guiding the mission. (~***Maulana Iqbal Umri, Chennai***)

My takeaway from our spiritual gathering

It was my first experience of participating in CPS Conference and I felt like I was in Paradise. I always pray to God, "O God please admit me in your Paradise and grant me the companionship of your beloved servants."

My Creator accepted my prayer so mercifully. Indeed! He answers those who call upon him. Now, I want this blessing forever. Maulana used to say everything has its price tag, so does the Paradise. I thought deeply, and I remember those who spend whatever they have in God's way, God will increase their reward and he will admit them in Paradise.

I am not wealthy, and I do not deem myself intelligent. I am a helpless creature, but I have a strong wish to enter Paradise. For this, I have one thing only, i.e., myself. So, I took a decision that I want to spend myself in the way of God. With the help of God, I need to improve myself as much as I can, to fulfil the task of becoming a person with great realization of God and spreading peace in society. May God almighty accept all our efforts and admit us in his neighbourhood. (**~A CPS Member**)

All CPS teams deserve congratulations on the organization of this wonderful spiritual programme. The Bihar CPS team especially thanks the Delhi CPS team for organizing such an inspiring conference.

It was the first programme after Maulana passed away. We certainly had some concerns about how this would be implemented. To what degree will people be interested? But the exemplary efforts of the Delhi team dispelled any fears and set up a successful programme.

The fire of introducing the peaceful message of Islam that Maulana has ignited in the hearts of the people and the enthusiasm that he has created, all the members of the team were a living example of this. It was evident that the whole team was filled with the same spirit that Maulana instilled into all of us. May Allah keep this sense of responsibility within us to our last breath!

When Maulana's video came out, it looked like Maulana was present among us. The minute Maulana's video started, there was silence in the hall. I got goosebumps every time Maulana's video was being played. During the conference, I felt that technology was a big miracle for the Muslim *ummah*. If used properly, it will show its effect to the same extent that the miracles of prophets have shown their effects. Thanks to Allah, our team is determined to make full use of technology.

Our mission is God-realization (*Marifah*) and introducing the peaceful message of Islam (*Shahadah*). God-realization for us and introducing the peaceful message of Islam amongst others. The CPS mission is founded on literature. So, we have to carry out this process mainly on the basis of literature and continue until our last breath. Maulana has fulfilled his responsibility completely. It is now our turn to take this work to the next level.

There's just one impediment and obstacle to that, and that's our disagreement. May Allah help us to remain together in spite of our differences! (**~Hafiz Abul Hakam Danyal, Bihar**)

I am short of words to express my happiness for being a part of such a well-knit, substantial, and meaningful to the core conference. It had the

potential to address minds of all ages and variegated intellectual levels. It was much more than a simple conference rather can safely be called a spiritual workshop. The content, the methodology, the management, the sincerity, the captivating expression blended with a positive body language, the quality work of introducing the message of Islam being done worldwide with the help of technology, the meticulous and responsible attitude of every member of the team was phenomenal. It will not be fair if I don't make a special mention of CPS women team. The thing to be noticed was the team spirit. It is said that teamwork demands a level of understanding at which no words are needed but simply a look and an instantaneous response. We witnessed this culture in the conference. The willingness for subordination, no ego clashes, amazing!

For me and all our team members, it was truly a great learning and recharging experience. We feel spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually elevated. I don't have even an iota of doubt that it was divinely supervised. Allah bless all the CPS missionaries from Delhi and other state and international chapters to take this mission from strength to strength in the days to come with even greater zeal.
(~M Saleem Wani, Rajouri, Jammu)



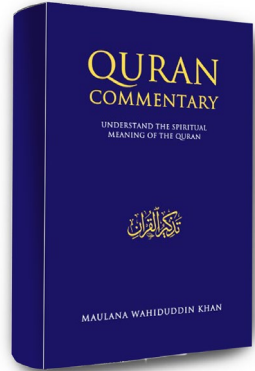


THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures

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

Translated from Arabic and commentary by
Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



Ha Mim. This Book is sent down from God, the Almighty, the Wise One. We created the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them purely for just ends, and for a specific term, but those who reject Faith turn away from what they have been warned of. (46: 1-3)

The study of the universe reveals that inherent in it are wisdom and meaningfulness. Then, how can a set of systems which is so meaningful at its beginning become meaningless at its end?

Truth, monolithic and immutable, is the greatest power of the universe. In spite of this, why is it that people reject it when it is presented before them? The reason is that in the present world people are simply informed of the Truth. In the Hereafter Truth will impose itself on them and at that time those very individuals who treated the Truth as unimportant and ignored it, will break down before it.

Say, 'Have you thought about those you call upon apart from God? Show me what they have created on the earth. Or do they have a share in the heavens? Bring me a Book revealed before this or some other vestige of knowledge, if you are telling the truth. And who is more misguided than one who invokes, besides God, such as will not answer him until the Day of Resurrection, and who [in fact] are not even aware of his call, and when mankind is gathered together, they will become their enemies, and will deny their worship?' (46: 4-6)

Knowledge is in fact of two types: revealed and established. The former reached man through the prophets, while the latter was established as such by means of research and experiments carried out by human

beings. Neither of these two types of knowledge indicates that there is any being worthy of worship except the one and only God. When neither supports the concept of polytheism, how can a polytheistic credo be appropriate for man? One who seeks the support of any thing or any being other than God, will find himself abandoned by that thing or being in the Hereafter.

And whenever Our clear revelations are recited to them and the Truth is brought to them, those who deny the truth say, 'This is plain magic.' Do they mean to say that the Messenger himself has fabricated it? Say [O Muhammad], 'If I have fabricated it myself, you will not be able to do anything to save me from God. He knows quite well what talk you indulge in. He is enough as a witness between me and you; and He is the Forgiving, the Merciful One.' (46: 7-8)

Say, 'I am not the first of God's messengers, and I do not know what will be done with me or with you: I do not follow anything but what is revealed to me, and I am merely a plain warner. Say, 'Have you thought: what if this Quran really is from God and you reject it? What if one of the Children of Israel testifies to its similarity to earlier scripture and believes in it, and yet you are too arrogant to do the same? God certainly does not guide evil doers.' (46: 9-10)

The Makkan polytheists regarded the Jews, whom they often met on trading expeditions, as a community of prophets and therefore very learned in religious disciplines.

When the Prophet Muhammad had become a controversial personality in Makkah, a number of these polytheists made enquiries of certain Jews about him. In the meantime, a Jewish scholar told them that, according to their books, a prophet was due to appear in those parts, and that he (Muhammad) might be that very prophet. Evidently, this Jew had indirectly accepted the prophethood of Muhammad.

The events of history had already proved that God's messengers do appear along with God's books. It was written in ancient divine scriptures that such a messenger was due to appear among the Ishmaelites. In the life and sayings of the Prophet of God, all those signs were clearly found that signalled prophethood. In the face of such signs and portents, those who denied the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad were not doing so on any rational grounds, but simply because, by accepting one who had hitherto been an ordinary individual in their eyes as the prophet of God, they would be damaging their own high position.

Those who are more concerned with their own pride and prestige than with the Truth, will always be led in the wrong direction by their warped mindset.

In ancient Arabia, the addressees of the Quran were too preoccupied by the greatness of their forebears to give its message any proper consideration. They said that it distressed them even to hear it, because it ran counter to the religion of their august predecessors and, on this account, they rejected it. But the Quran had another aspect to it and that was its literary supremacy. Every Arabic linguistic expert has felt that it is an extraordinary work. It is true that the works of certain human beings possess extraordinary literary value, but there is a limit to the merit of a composition by an ordinary mortal. Indeed, the literary majesty of the Quran is inconceivably greater than any possible feat of the human mind. In order, therefore, to lessen the importance of the Quran from this angle, its detractors held that it was magic, i.e., it was a feat of magical presentation and not a sublime rendering of facts.

When opponents stoop to obduracy, any serious person would remain silent after saying, 'The issue between you and me is now before God for His decision.' This is not defeatism but a forward-looking strategy. If one remains silent before an obstinate person, one actually distances oneself from the dispute and that brings one's opponent face to face with his own conscience, so that if there is any feeling of rectitude left in him, it should be aroused. □



The rays of the sun do not enter a closed room. Similarly, a closed mind cannot be the recipient of God's inspiration.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

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

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

The Hajj is over and so many lakhs of people have performed it and have started returning home. It is said that it is a worship which is to be performed once in a lifetime. So, in this context how can a person benefit from it in the rest of their life?

The significance of the pilgrimage is for man to turn towards God, making God the central focus of his life. Although *Hajj* lasts for just a few days, the lessons it provides have a much broader significance. *Hajj* is a comprehensive guide for the entirety of one's life. A person's psyche is moulded in accordance with his thoughts. When we set off towards God, our mind turns towards Him. We begin to think of God. We will think of all His blessings on us and be grateful for them. This realization makes us spiritual persons in our life.

There are different rituals which a pilgrim performs during Hajj. Does each ritual have a special lifetime lesson and application?

Yes, certainly each ritual has a history behind it and a lesson ahead for all times and for the humankind. For instance, when we take leave of our homes and families and set off for *Hajj*, we feel as if we are journeying towards God. It feels like we have left our world and are entering the world of God. We feel we are heading towards the House of God, to the abode and working place of God's Prophet and his Companions, to the historically significant places of people who had devoted their lives for the sake of God, and who gave their lives in God's path. With this, the pilgrim also realizes the fact that he is setting off for that place which God specially chose to reveal His final guidance to humankind.

What will be the manifestation of the words “God is the Greatest, there is none worthy of worship other than Him and all praise is for Him” which a pilgrim constantly repeats during the Hajj once he returns from Hajj?

When the pilgrim reaches a particular place close to the place of pilgrimage, he calls out the above words. By constantly repeating these words, a consciousness develops in a *Haji* (pilgrim) that all greatness is for God alone. This is the real secret of social consciousness. You cannot have unity and harmonious collective living where everyone thinks that they are greater than the others. On the other hand, when everyone surrenders their sense of individual greatness, you will find unity and harmony. People can live harmoniously together only when everyone surrenders their sense of greatness before a single being.

In continuation of the understanding of manifestation of each rituals, we would like to know the incorporation of the rituals of circumambulation and the running between the hillocks of Safa and Marwah in our everyday life.

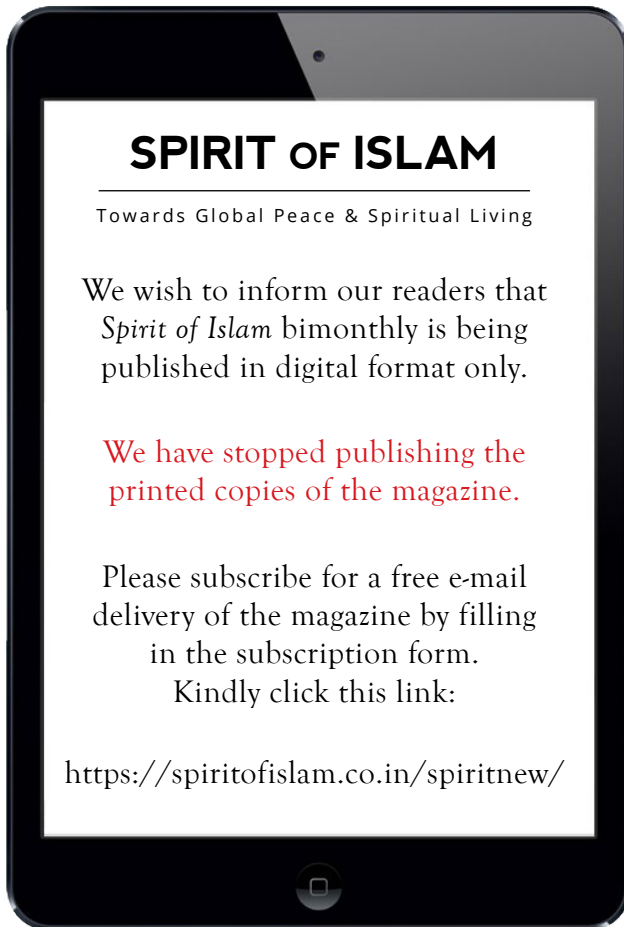
The *tawaf* is symbolic of making all of one's efforts constrained to a single focus. This is akin to our solar system, where all the planets revolve around a single sun, the axis around which they whirl. This is a practice of living a God-centric life. In daily life all believers turn towards the direction of the *Kabah* five times for prayer. This instils in them a sense of unity with their fellow beings.

The run between the two hillocks of Safa and Marwah is a symbolic declaration. It is an expression of the pilgrim's determination to devote all of himself to God's path. It is not simply a mere physical act. In the form of repetition of a historical act, it stands for the pilgrim's willingness to spend his whole life running in God's path. It is symbolic of making all activities throughout one's life to be contained within certain boundaries. If our activities are not bound or regulated in this manner, it would lead to chaos. Such regulation is necessary for a well-ordered life.

Vast numbers of people from across the world assemble in the plain of Arafat during Hajj which presents an astonishing sight. How does this fit into our life back home?

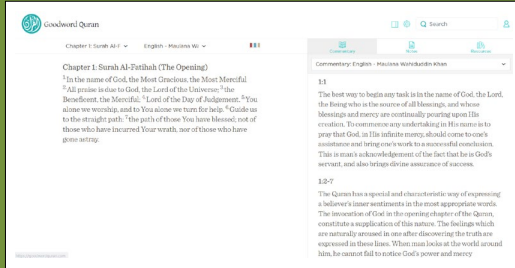
If one realizes this significance of the assembly at Arafat, one's life can be totally transformed. It is as if all the differences among human beings have suddenly vanished, and that, setting aside all their conflicts, they have surrendered themselves to the one God. It is as if they have all become one, just as their God is one.

Despite their differences of language, colour, status, and gender, they have become identical and one. Different nationalities, it appears, have all turned into one single nation or community. *Hajj* is a glorious and unparalleled expression of human unity and collectiveness. This feeling of oneness amongst humankind is what is required for peace and harmony leading to all kinds of development. □



Read the Quran wherever you are

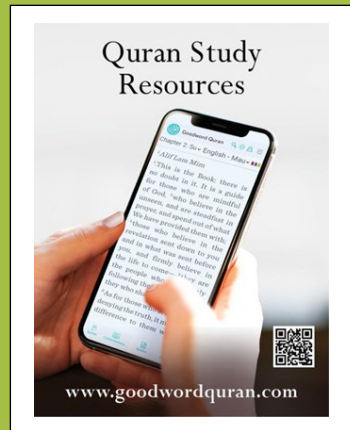
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There is no greater sacrifice than that of one's own opinion.



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