

ENGLISH BIMONTHLY ISSUE 102 SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2021

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



**A true person's life is subordinated to principles,
while a false person's life is subordinated to interests.**

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 102 SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2021

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CONTENTS

■ FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF'S DESK	5
■ SENSE OF REFORM	8
■ GUIDING ONE TO A PURPOSEFUL LIFE	9
■ HOW TO AVOID TENSION	11
■ TEACHING THE TEACHERS	13
■ THINK GOOD OF OTHERS	15
■ TOWARDS GLOBAL PEACE	17
■ FRUITS OF SACRIFICE	20
■ A LESSON FROM TURKEY	21
■ ROLE OF <i>ULEMA</i> IN THE CONTEMPORARY TIMES	22
■ CULTIVATING NATIONAL TREASURES	27
■ CODE RED FOR HUMANITY	29
■ AN INTERVIEW	31
■ CHILDREN'S CORNER	39
■ BOOK REVIEW	41
■ CPS NEWSLETTER	44
■ THE WORD OF GOD	46
■ YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED	48

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 Sufism' 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. Dr 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 thecentreforpeace@gmail.com

OBSTACLE IN THE ACCEPTANCE OF TRUTH

CALLING people to God is a solemn responsibility of a Muslim. This noble task of calling people to God is performed directly as well as indirectly. The direct means of this missionary task is to address the people through spoken or written words. The indirect means comprises of the good conduct of the Muslims in society that influences other people to ponder over the message of Islam.

Both of these approaches may or may not yield the desired result. What might be the reason when the call towards the truth of Islam fails to elicit a positive response? The reason the Islamic message does not get across, people say, is that it is not backed up by actions. Most people can only be won over by a practical model; intellectual discussions and rational proofs are not enough.

This is an idealistic thinking. The problem is, we are not in a position to say to others: "Look, here is an Islamic individual; here an Islamic home; here an Islamic community."

At first sight, the statement that 'people can only be won over by a practical model; intellectual discussions and rational proofs are not enough' appears quite correct. However, it is only half, not the whole, truth. Indeed, the only words which have any value in the sight of God are those which are backed up by actions. From this point of view, one

who preaches the message of Islam must definitely practice it. But it would be naive to think that, once his actions back up his words, people will immediately flock to him in droves.

Every prophet sent by God was an ideal individual on a practical level. Seeing the prophets, and their exemplary actions, did people flock to them in a spontaneous outburst of belief? The Quran tells us that this was not the case. Most people who saw and heard the prophets disbelieved. The prophets backed up their words with righteous actions but, instead of believing, the response of their contemporaries is mentioned in the Quran thus: Alas for human beings! They ridicule every messenger that comes to them. (36: 30)

*In reality, people
worship themselves,
that is why they
do not become
worshippers of God.
This is the greatest
obstacle to the
acceptance of truth.*

The truth is that it is not the practices—or malpractices—of the preacher that prevent people from accepting the truth; it is the self-interest of the listener. There is a big price tag on truth. It entails a downgrading of the self, a destruction of the ego. In single-minded devotion to truth, other objectives have to be cast to the winds. To be able to mould one's life in accordance with truth, one has to break down one's existing life-structure.

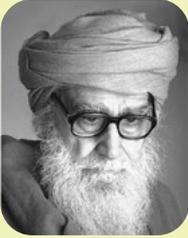
In reality, people worship themselves, that is why they do not become worshippers of God. This is the greatest obstacle to the acceptance

of truth. It was for this reason that the cream of the human race—the Messengers of God—were treated with disdain and ridicule. Despite their exemplary actions, more rejected them than believed in them. □

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IN FOCUS



We bring you two articles every issue under the headings of 'Journey of Realization' and 'Personal Experiences' 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)

SENSE OF REFORM

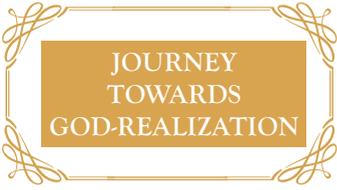
I once met a young Muslim. He was a professional calligrapher. He said that he had been reading *Al-Risala* regularly. (*Al-Risala* magazine is the Urdu version of *Spirit of Islam*.) He went on to say that he liked the magazine very much. However, he had one reservation. He did not like that *Al-Risala* keeps pointing out the shortcomings of the Muslims. Such approach, he believed, would create a sense of inferiority among Muslims.

I said, "You are a calligrapher. Suppose you do not bring out the curve in O and S and other such letters. Now, if your teacher tells you about your shortcomings, will you say that my teacher is making me insecure and is creating a sense of inferiority in me?" The young man replied in the negative. I told him, "With this personal example, you can now understand the articles of *Al-Risala* where some aspect of the Muslims is criticized. The fact is that the purpose of these articles is not to create a sense of inferiority in Muslims, but to create a sense of reform. It is a known fact that no person or group can progress in this world without correcting their shortcomings."

There is a saying in Arabic that the one who advises you is better than the one who praises you. This quote is totally correct. Every person who is kind to someone will do his best to point out his shortcomings. That is the way of true reformers.

The Quran mentions essential attributes to avoid loss, one of which is the essential attribute of 'keep on advising each other for truth and patience'. In this world, only that group can escape loss and ruin whose soul is alive in the sense that when its members see someone leaving the path of truth, they should immediately reprimand him, and when they see someone getting impatient, they should make him aware of the importance of patience.

The spirit of giving advice and listening to advice was fully present in the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad. Umar Farooq once gave a ruling in a case. Ali saw a mistake in this decision. Ali brought the mistake to Umar's attention. Although Umar was the Caliph and ruler, he immediately accepted it and said: If it were not for Ali, Umar would have perished. □



GUIDING ONE TO A PURPOSEFUL LIFE

PEOPLE'S attitude towards death, in general, is one of utter indifference. Some show feigned ignorance on the subject of death. There are very few who are concerned with what comes in the wake of death; they focus their attention on gaining an honourable position in the life after death. Majority, on the other hand, are caught up in worldly affairs. Their ultimate ambition is worldly honour and prestige. Under present circumstances, those who have consolidated their position on earth seem to be successful, but death will shatter this facade. It will become clear that those who seemed to have no base in the world were in fact standing on the most solid of foundations, while the position of those who had reached a high status in the world will be exposed as false. Death will obliterate everything; afterwards only that which has worth in the afterlife will remain. We are obsessed with the world which meets our eyes. We fail to pay attention to the call of truth. If we were to see the next life with our worldly vision, we would immediately submit to God. We would realize that if we do not submit to Him today, we will have to do so in the future world, when submission will profit no one.

True submission to God does not mean just acknowledging His existence. It involves total attachment to Him. It is an inward state with an outward form.

A city clock tower informs people of the correct time. People set their watches according to it. Nobody bothers about who the engineers and mechanics who constructed the clock tower were, or where the parts that they used were produced. The fact that it keeps good time is enough to attract everybody. God's religion is much the same sort of clock tower, constructed for man's guidance; yet people fail to look at it and find their way by it.

There can only be one reason for this. People are serious in wanting to know the time, but not the Word of God. God's religion is concerned with the next life, while a clock tower is a thing of this world. The clock has an important part to play in the realization of people's worldly

ambitions. They recognize its importance. But they have no ambitions for the future life, and no regard for the importance of something which guides them to eternal success.

True submission to God does not mean just acknowledging His existence. It involves total attachment to Him. It is an inward state with an outward form. Discovery of God is an event of incomparable impact which can never remain hidden. If God's truth has been revealed to someone, it will always be apparent. One so favoured will desire those around him to bear witness to the fact that he has answered the call of God, set aside worldly gain and expediency, and that he has devoted himself entirely to God.

If one claims to possess inner faith, but does not express it, one can only be looking at faith as a convenience. Anyone who puts worldly interests before God cannot ever discover Him. Preoccupation with worldly priorities and prejudices are the very opposite of true submission to God, and two such conflicting states can never merge in one soul. □



HOW TO AVOID TENSION

A Realistic Solution to a Permanent Problem

HOW to attain a tension-free life? It is a question asked by every man and woman. The Quran provides us a simple solution to this problem. This solution is mentioned in the chapter of the Quran entitled *Al-Ra'd* (The Thunder). The relevant Quranic verse is as follows:

Those who believe and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of God—surely in the remembrance of God hearts can find comfort.
(13: 28)

This Quranic verse refers to the creation plan of God. The formula given in this verse is:

Contentment in this world is only for those who willingly accept the creation plan of God.

According to the Quranic explanation, the present world was created for only a limited period and also for a temporary purpose—that is, to develop your personality so that you may become eligible to enter the next world called Paradise.

Now the problem is that, although man was born with an ideal nature, and is an ideal-seeking creature—in the sense of wanting to have all the best things in life—the present world was not created for this purpose. In terms of personality development, the present world has enormous scope but, in terms of material achievement, the present world is very limited in its scope.

Those who want to fulfil their material desires in the present world will very soon find that they have failed to build the edifice of their dreams. Anything that they achieve seems to them less than ideal. This is a source of all kinds of mental tension and stress.

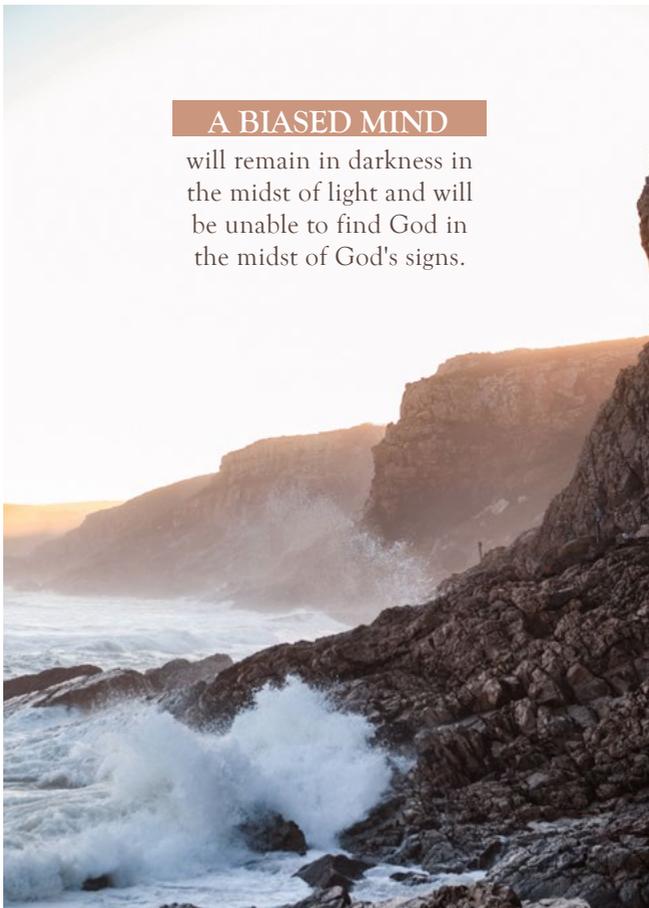
The formula given in the Quran is this: try your best to evolve your personality in terms of spiritual and intellectual development. But, as far as your material requirements are concerned, adopt the need-based formula and not the greed-based formula. All kinds of tension and

Those who want to fulfil their material desires in the present world will very soon find that they have failed to build the edifice of their dreams. Anything that they achieve seems to them less than ideal. This is a source of all kinds of mental tension and stress.

stress are the result of trying to achieve things that are not achievable in this world.

The problem is that people judge things by a wrong yardstick; they judge their achievements by an ideal yardstick. This is unrealistic. The realistic formula is: use the ideal yardstick only when judging your personality development. But when it comes to your material needs, use a different yardstick. Here, you have to realize that only less than ideal can be achieved.

If you want to have a tension-free life in this world, adopt the realistic approach. Don't run after your desires, for, in reality, they are impossible to fulfil. □



TEACHING THE TEACHERS

Reversal of Roles

IN the post-WWII decades, Japan imported superior industrial technology from the West, at times by outright purchase, but more often by borrowing or on a credit basis. As a result, Japan today stands on its own feet economically and is in a position to export not only its manufactured goods but also its know-how to other countries. According to an article written by Peter F. Drucker (published in *Harvard Business Review*, January 1981), the postwar success of Japanese economy is both an impressive and a puzzling achievement. He writes that the accomplishments of Japanese industry are the result of Japan's having defined more ably than any other industrial nation some of the essential rules for managing complex organizations in the modern world.

Owing to its advanced technical expertise, it is now in a position to help other countries, enter into friendly relations with them and draw up contracts to do business with them. Some of their feats include working on the latest irrigation projects in Thailand, giving instruction in computer programming in Singapore, constructing iron and steel factories in South Korea and China and setting up petrochemical industries in the Middle East, etc. The Japanese learnt iron and steel making from the Americans and have now developed it so extensively that they are at present exporting their skills to the Americans themselves. It has become the world leader in floating solar power. 73 of the world's 100 largest floating solar plants are in Japan. Japan, once the learner, is now so well placed in so many fields, particularly in communication and electronics that America is seeking Japanese technical assistance in many of its important military departments. The students are now teaching their teachers.

All too often, we have to lose in order to gain. We have to resign ourselves to humble position until we can work ourselves up to more satisfactory heights. Those who recognize this necessity as one of the facts of life will have a better chance of succeeding in this world.

Japan willingly submitted to industrial tutelage for 20 years and, as a result, has attained the position of industrial dominance today. The Japanese were far too conscious of their dependence on imports for energy, raw materials, and food. If it had chosen not to recognize the

supremacy of others at that crucial point in its development, and had felt too proud to go to them for help, it could never have had such resounding successes.

All too often, we have to lose in order to gain. We have to resign ourselves to humble position until we can work ourselves up to more satisfactory heights. Those who recognize this necessity as one of the facts of life will have a better chance of succeeding in this world. Those who expect to be able to climb straight to the top without first having accepted a position of humility, or who persist in blaming others for their failures have no chance of progress. Patience, fortitude, tenacity and realistic ambition are the virtues which will see us through to success. □



LORD,
inspire me to be thankful
for the blessings You
have granted me

THE QURAN 27: 19

THINK GOOD OF OTHERS

Be Realistic and Positive

WILL Durant (1885–1981) was an American writer, historian, and philosopher. While talking about the relevance of history, he said: “The present is the past rolled up for action and the past is the present unrolled for understanding.” It means that human behaviour has remained same throughout the ages. Therefore, it is quite natural that we can learn a great deal about the human response to various situations.

Caliph al-Mansour of the Abbasid caliphate (714-775) founded the city of Baghdad. During the Abbasid era, Baghdad developed so much that it became the largest city in the world.

Building a city like Baghdad was a costly project. Therefore, a few days after the commencement of the project, Caliph al-Mansour began to feel the burden of high price for the undertaking. Seeing this, one of his courtiers, Abu Ayyub Moriani, advised the Caliph to demolish the palaces of Iranian kings, some distance from Baghdad, and use their bricks and stones in the construction of Baghdad.

When Khalid ibn Barmak, a minister of Caliph Mansour, heard about this, he said, “O leader of the believers, do not do this. The palaces of the Iranian kings are a symbol of the victory of Islam. Seeing them increases the belief in the greatness of Islam in our people. Moreover, the cost of demolishing it is more than the benefit that we are expecting.”

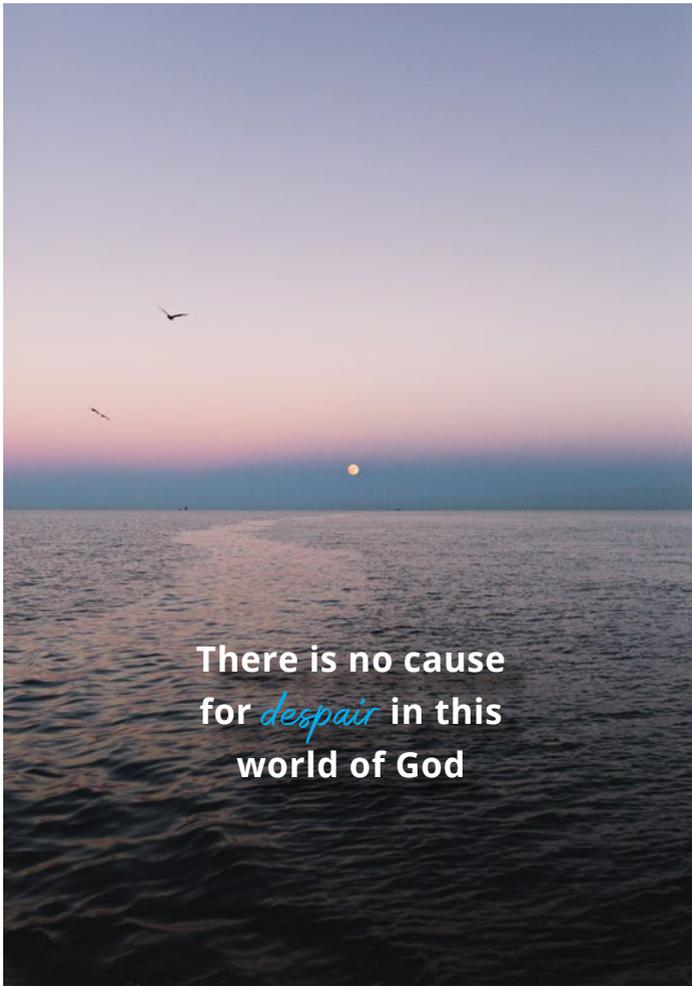
However, Caliph al-Mansour did not follow the opinion of Khalid ibn Barmak. He said, “You are opposing the demolition of these palaces because you are still prejudiced against the Arabs.” Khalid ibn Barmak was an Iranian. The Caliph looked at the racial background of Khalid and thought that he was opposing the demolition of kings’ palaces because he wanted the mark of Iranian kings’ greatness to remain.

Caliph al-Mansour ordered the demolition of these palaces. An army of labourers and workers set out to demolish the palace and load its stones on donkeys and mules and bring them to Baghdad. But soon

We must look at someone's advice as advice, we should not necessarily consider it as arising out of ill-will. It is quite possible that our guess is wrong and the counselor really gave the best and useful advice

al-Mansour understood that an exorbitant amount was being spent on demolition, and the amount of building materials that could be procured was way less in proportion to the amount being spent. So he stopped the work of demolition in the middle.

This event from history teaches us that we must look at someone's advice as advice, we should not necessarily consider it as arising out of ill-will. It is quite possible that our guess is wrong and the counselor really gave the best and useful advice. ▣



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.



NUGGETS OF WISDOM

THIS is a selection of nuggets of wisdom written by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. The common thread that runs through these quotes is 'peace'. Peace within and peace without was a topic most dear to Maulana. He wrote a number of books and lectured throughout the world on the subject of peace.

The conciliatory approach always minimizes the problem, while the confrontational approach aggravates matters, leaving the initial problem unsolved.

There is a saying: "If all think alike, no one thinks very much." This aptly explains the value of difference. Diversity, and not uniformity is part of the scheme of nature.

An act of avoidance appears to be benefiting the other party, but its actual aim is to save us from the futility of confrontation, thus enabling the journey of our life to continue without encountering any obstacle.

Any justification for violence is invalid. Whenever an individual or a group engages in violence, they have the option of a peaceful method. When a peaceful opportunity is available, then violence must be in principle discarded absolutely and peace must be adopted absolutely.

The act of tolerance is not a matter of compulsion. It results naturally from the elevated moral calibre of a person.

In a towering rage, a man is not in control of himself. He takes a wrong step and destruction follows in its wake. It becomes too late for regrets. He is unable to save himself from his own wrong action.

Observing silence is a great act. When someone is silent, his attention is diverted more to 'heavenly' matters than to 'worldly' ones. He eschews superficiality and engages himself with deeper realities.

In this world, every man sometimes loses and sometimes gains. Losing and winning are not in themselves important. What is of actual importance is how people conduct themselves while facing these situations.

Patience will ensure that whenever an individual has some bitter experience, he will opt for the way of tolerance rather than that of reaction to provocation. It will enable him to absorb shocks and to continue undeterred on his onward journey.

Difference of opinions can be turned to one's advantage. Difference of opinions invites discussion, which gives you a good opportunity to remove misconceptions. Moreover, difference gives you an opportunity to turn an enemy into a friend.

While one short emotional outburst is all that is needed for violence to be indulged in, a peaceful action requires serious thought and strong justification.

Patience is no retreat. Patience gives the strength to restrain one's emotions in delicate situations and use one's mind to find a course of action along result-oriented lines.

In everyday matter, where there is none of the stress and strain of opposition, no one has difficulty in being tolerant. It is only in situations fraught with conflict, that the truly tolerant man will prove his mettle.

You are more precious than everything else. So always try to save yourself. If in any situation, you have lost something, even then you have something, and that is yourself. So, forget what is lost and take that which still exists for you.

While revenge may open a new chapter that is revenge after revenge, forgiveness ends this chain. Forgiveness means that you have put a full stop, while revenge in this case means that you have put commas.

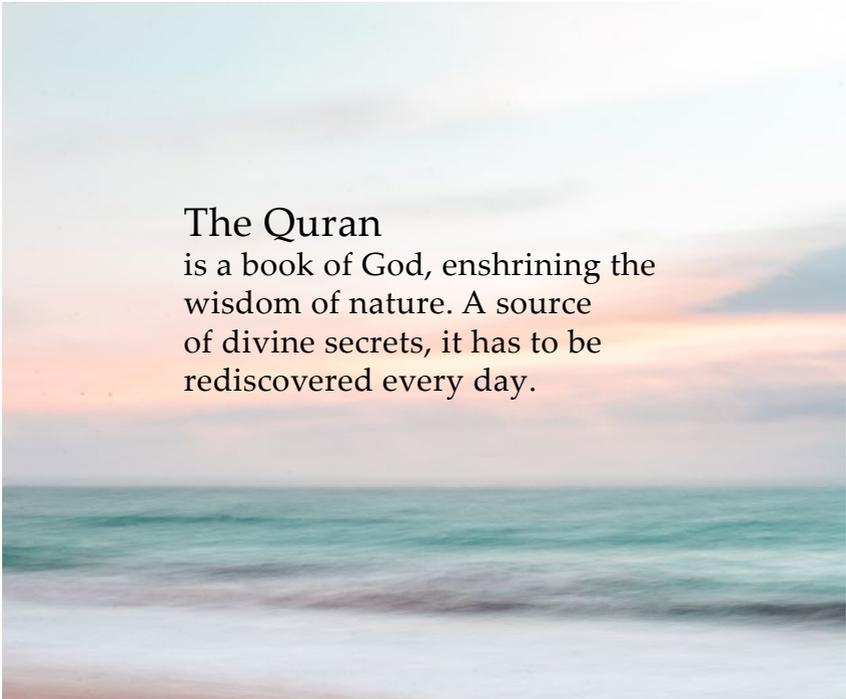
The great secret of life is realism, and there is no form of realism greater than accepting defeat. To do so is to acknowledge the fact that, far from being ahead of others, one is behind them. In other words, it is to know where one stands in life.

A peaceful course of action is not just one of the possibilities. It is the only feasible and result-oriented option.

Overcoming the enemy by power is half a victory; whereas overcoming the enemy by love is a complete victory.

Violence and peace both have wide connotations. Violence includes everything from hatred to war. Peace includes everything from tolerance to love. Both violence and peace are the results of human thinking.

A peaceful person is one whose inner self is so deeply immersed in peace that no outward event can disturb his emotional balance. He takes pity on those who are easily angered. Where ordinary people become provoked, he remains blissfully serene. □



The Quran
is a book of God, enshrining the
wisdom of nature. A source
of divine secrets, it has to be
rediscovered every day.

FRUITS OF SACRIFICE

Giving back to Society

HOW does so miraculous a thing as a tree come into being? It is by a tiny seed giving itself up to the task, sacrificing itself so that a lush, verdant tree can grow out of the ground. And how is a house built? Ask the bricks from which it is built, and they will tell you that it is through some of them having buried themselves. That is how a construction comes to stand erect.

And that is the way man should construct his own life as well—through sacrifice. It is only if some of the individuals making up a society are ready to sacrifice their own futures that the future of humanity will take a constructive turn. And no community will prosper if a certain number of its members are not willing to accept adversity—even ruin—as their lot in life. Construction stands upon the bedrock of sacrifice. It is one of the immutable laws of nature. It applies in every walk of life.

Every construction has a top, which we can all see. But we sometimes forget about the foundation, for it lies buried deep in the ground. Yet, it is upon this invisible foundation that the whole building rests. There has to be this foundation and, in order to lay it, there have to be individuals who are prepared, figuratively speaking, to bury themselves in the ground. That is what sacrifice is!

An individual might, in a fit of emotion, give his very life for some cause, but that is not what sacrifice is all about. Real sacrifice means taking a part so small and so inconspicuous in constructive work that it is almost invisible, and this, no matter how prolonged the period or how far off ultimate success appears to be. It entails a struggle which offers neither fame nor wealth; it is to 'bury' oneself in order to build, to forge a future by giving up the present.

Once some people identify their devotion to a community, they go on to perform supreme acts of sacrifice to see their communities prosper, thrive and overcome obstacles. According to Paul C. Stern, "They develop loyalties strong enough to overcome or preempt considerations of personal well-being and competing loyalties to family, community, and other group." (*Why do People Sacrifice for Their Nations* published in *International Society of Political Psychology*, 1995) The progress of the entire nation is dependent upon there being some elements of society who are ready to make such sacrifices. They are the seeds which, buried in the ground, give life to humanity; they are bricks on whose foundation humankind builds anew. □

A LESSON FROM TURKEY

The Permanency of Religion

ISMET INONU (1884-1973) was a Turkish general and statesman who supported Kemal Ataturk. He was elected President of Turkey on the latter's death on November 10, 1938, and became permanent chairman of the Republican People's Party.

Throughout his rule, the aggressive secularism which had characterized Ataturk's reign continued to be enforced. Secularism was one of the famous six principles formulated by Kemal Ataturk. Secularism included the reform of law, involving the abolition of religious courts and schools (1924) and the adoption of a purely secular system of family law, substitution of the Latin alphabet for the Arabic in writing Turkish, the adoption (1925) of the Gregorian calendar, the replacement of Friday by Sunday as the weekly holiday (1935), wearing of clerical garb outside places of worship was forbidden in 1934, and the abolition of the caliphate among many others.

Yet, even with full government machinery being employed to eradicate ritual practices of Islam from Turkey, religion continued to flourish. All measures taken to root it out failed miserably, and Ismet Inonu had ultimately to lift many curbs on religious practices on the occasion of his election, as he feared that without public support he would not be elected.

When Ismet Inonu was upon his death bed, he talked briefly of his experiences. The gist of this account was later published in an Arabic journal from Kuwait. Speaking of repressive measures in Turkey, he said, "I find it hard to believe what I see around me. We made as many attempts as possible to root out Islam from the hearts of the Turks and replace it with western culture. But, astonishingly, the very reverse has happened. We sowed the seed of secularism, but the crop it yielded was Islam."

Islam is a religion of nature and its roots are deeply embedded in human nature. Just as nature cannot be stamped out in man, so Islam cannot be stamped out in the human psyche.

Muslims all over the world have been devoting their energies to the safeguarding of Islam, but because it has its basis in human nature, this is really unnecessary effort. All those who really wish to serve Islam should expend their energy in conveying this message of God to others. So far as the safeguarding of Islam is concerned, that is a task which has already been accomplished. □

ROLE OF ULEMA IN THE CONTEMPORARY TIMES

Targeting the Priorities

WHAT is the leadership role of the *ulema* or religious scholars in contemporary times? To understand this, one first needs to be clear about what role Islam sets for religious scholars. This will provide us the proper criterion for examining the course of action adopted by the religious scholars in our times. In my understanding, the following Quranic verse gives us appropriate guidance about the role of religious scholars of Islam:

“It is not right that all the believers should go out [in time of war] all together. Why, then, does not a party from every group come to [the Prophet] in order to acquire a deeper knowledge of religion and to warn their people, so that they can guard themselves against evil?” (9: 122)

This verse gives a guiding principle that one section of the Muslims has to engage itself full time in the sphere of knowledge, while the other looks after the sphere of politics. Thus, Islam differentiates between the arena of activity of religious scholars and that of political leaders. To this end, religious scholars have to keep themselves away from the political field and provide intellectual and spiritual guidance to the people, while politicians are charged with the task of administration and organization. This principle does not indicate any opposition between religion and politics, but, rather, a division of the arenas of activity among the believers. This division is fully in accordance with Islamic jurisprudence.

In the words of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), for political leadership, the strong and capable person will be preferable to the weak person even if he is more virtuous. (*Majmu al-Fatawa* by Ibn Taymiyyah, Vol. 28, p. 255) From this, we can understand that as far as practical politics is concerned, those who engage in this field must possess the necessary skills. Not everyone can shoulder the responsibility of practical politics. It was based on the recognition of this difference among people in terms of their capabilities that the Prophet of Islam repeatedly indicated to the Muslim community that after him they should appoint Abu Bakr as their leader, while, on the other hand, he advised Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, Abu Hurairah and Hassan bin Thabit never to accept any governmental post.

This is because due to their inborn qualities, some people are more suitable for occupying official posts, while others are more suitable for fulfilling the role of scholarship and spiritual guidance. According to Islam, the political field should be given over to those who possess the requisite political skills and capabilities, while the religious scholars should engage in various other fields that are also necessary for the community. Accordingly, while politicians are charged with the task of administering and organizing the people, scholars have the responsibility of providing the people with the knowledge that they need.

This indicates that the believers must respect the division between the 'people of politics' and the 'people of academics'. This also suggests that it is not only in ordinary circumstances that the religious scholars of the Muslim community must fulfill their responsibility as teachers of the people. Rather, they must continue to play this constructive role even when they see that the rulers have fallen prey to corruption. No matter how degenerate the system of governance may appear to have become, the religious scholars must not deviate from the work that they have been entrusted with.

Some people are more suitable for occupying official posts, while others are more suitable for fulfilling the role of scholarship and spiritual guidance.

As a matter of principle, it is not the task of religious scholars to become involved in practical politics. In case they assume this role, much more basic responsibilities are bound to be neglected. Therefore, they have to leave political disputes to politicians to handle, and instead devote themselves entirely to scholarly works like understanding the position of Islam in the modern age, social reform, constructive activities, and introducing Islam to people in the contemporary idiom.

This division of the sphere of activity was followed by the Companions of the Prophet, as well as by later generations, right from the age of the rightly guided caliphs, through the Umayyad caliphate and down to the end of the Abbasid caliphate. Similarly, the Spanish Muslim religious scholars and other scholars made an impressive intellectual and scientific contribution by keeping themselves aloof from politics. This pattern continued for around 1000 years and enabled these scholars to focus their energies on the enormously valuable task of crystallizing the various branches of Islamic knowledge while remaining unaffected by the political tumult raging around them.

Principle of Gradualness

During this entire period, the religious scholars focused on the scholarship work and spiritual training of the Muslims following the principle of gradualness of the Prophet of Islam. According to a *Hadith* narrated by Aisha: "... When the people inclined to Islam, the verses regarding lawful and unlawful things were revealed. If the first thing to be revealed was: 'Do not drink alcoholic drinks,' people would have said, 'We will never leave alcoholic drinks,' and if a verse had been revealed to the effect, 'Do not commit fornication, 'they would have said, 'We will never give it up.'" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*)

From this, we understand that the Prophet of Islam's method was of gradualness, that is, one needs to bring about intellectual purification of the individuals before going ahead with the practical enforcement of laws. Only then will the people of a society or a nation be willing to accept Islamic laws.

Without preparing the populace through this principle of gradualness of the Prophet, the religious scholars, over the last few hundred years, set themselves the target of establishing Islamic rule in various parts of the world. In present times also, many movements to impose Shariah were launched in many Muslim countries. However, these efforts of the religious scholars did not result in the establishment of purely Shariah-based rule in any Muslim country. But what did result from all of this was that Muslims everywhere became divided into, broadly, two mutually opposed camps that were at war with each other. If in the colonial period, non-Muslim forces killed Muslims, now Muslims began killing their co-religionists. Consequently, everywhere Muslim societies fell prey to destructive activities.

The Prophet of Islam's method was of gradualness, that is, one needs to bring about intellectual purification of the individuals before going ahead with the practical enforcement of laws.

Why did these movements to impose Islamic law prove to be counterproductive? The reason is that everywhere the watchword was the enforcement of Shariah law, where the example of introducing change by a gradual process as set by the Prophet of Islam was not followed. I would like to cite an example.

In January 1827, Sayyed Ahmad Barelvi and his companions had established what they called an Islamic government in the Peshawar region, near the Afghan border. Sayyed Ahmad was selected as the

head of the state, the *Amir-ul-Momineen* (Commander of the Faithful). But, very soon, serious differences developed, to the point where local Muslims set about killing the representatives that Sayyed Ahmad had appointed in their areas. And so, this 'Islamic government' collapsed almost as soon as it had been established!

Today, Muslim leaders have launched various movements for the enforcement of Shariah in various countries. But even after a long struggle, these movements have failed to achieve their goal. All they have succeeded in doing is create traditions of violence and coercion. The reason was that religious scholars have sought to impose these laws without the willingness of the populace to accept Islamic laws.

Had the Muslims in question followed the method of the Prophet, they would have opted for the way of status-quoism regarding the political system of the country. They could have subordinated matters of politics and government to the democratic process. They could have given the people the opportunity to elect their representatives by the peaceful, democratic procedure of voting, thus giving them their share in governance. Further, they would have understood that the right way of working was to begin their work from the non-political field. By imparting peaceful training, these leaders could have reformed the mind and character of the people. Opting for the prophetic wisdom of gradualness, the religious scholars could have changed the thinking and character of individuals, so they would become ready to accept Islamic laws.

The ulema must cultivate a spirit of tolerance, and, despite their differences, must work towards promoting unity. Without this, the Muslim community can achieve no major progress.

Advice to Religious Scholars

If *ulema* or religious scholars have to perform their role in contemporary times, I would like to offer them the following advice:

1. The *ulema* of Islam must, first of all, decide to completely dissociate from practical politics. Their real work is in the fields of knowledge, scholarship, *Dawah*, and intellectual reform. They can, when it is necessary, express their views on political issues, but it is not proper for them to play a practical role in politics under any circumstances.
2. Along with contemporary religious education, the *ulema* must be made aware of trends in modern thought. Without this, they will

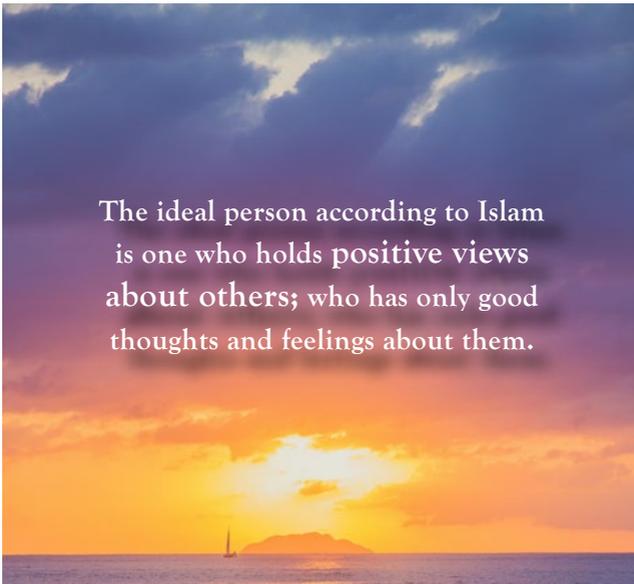
not be able to properly fulfill their responsibilities in the modern age.

3. The *ulema* must permit open criticism of each other. Without this, it is not possible to overcome people's mental stagnation and promote wisdom and insight.
4. The *ulema* must cultivate a spirit of tolerance, and, despite their differences, must work towards promoting unity. Without this, the Muslim community can achieve no major progress.
5. Besides engaging in the education and development of the Muslims at large, the *ulema* have another very important task—that of *Dawah*, inviting others to the path of God, conveying the message of the true religion to all humankind.

It is my advice to the *ulema* to stay away from politics, and focus, instead, on the reform of Muslims, awakening the true spirit of Islam among them, producing Islamic literature according to modern standards necessary for performing their role in contemporary times. Then, they will be able to play a positive role in bringing about peace and progress in society in line with the teachings of Islam. □



The ideal person according to Islam
is one who holds positive views
about others; who has only good
thoughts and feelings about them.



CULTIVATING NATIONAL TREASURES

Prerequisite Qualities

INDIA, officially the Republic of India, is a country in South Asia. It is the seventh-largest country by area, the second-most populous country (with 1.39 billion people), and the most populous democracy in the world. It is bounded by the Indian Ocean on the south, the Arabian Sea on the southwest, and the Bay of Bengal on the southeast. It shares land borders with Pakistan to the west; China, Nepal, and Bhutan to the northeast; and Myanmar (Burma) and Bangladesh to the east. In the Indian Ocean, India is in the vicinity of Sri Lanka and the Maldives. India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands share a maritime border with Thailand and Indonesia.

India celebrates its Independence Day on August 15. On the same day in the year 1947, India got freedom from the British Colonialism. Since then, every Independence Day celebration is marked by resolutions to build a strong and prosperous India. To develop a strong and thriving India, a national character is needed.

What is national character? It is, to put it simply, the capacity and the will to hold the interests of the nation supreme in every sphere. If there is a clash between individual and national interests, individual concerns must be subordinated to the greater good of the nation. Whenever a nation has made any progress, it has been due to this spirit of nationalism. Without such a spirit, no nation can advance either internally or externally.

This character is presented through a historical example here.

The *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB) is a work of reference on noteworthy figures from British history. It was first published in London in January 1985. When the idea to supply “full, accurate and concise biographies of all noteworthy inhabitants of the British Islands and colonies from the earliest period to the present time”, was first conceived by publisher George Smith (1824-1901), he was treading ground on which all who had gone before him had failed. It was a gargantuan task which called for a very high level of perseverance and hard work over a long period of time.

An effort of gigantic scale requires selfless devotion, utter dedication and unbounded patience. One must keep on working tirelessly knowing quite well that he will not be able to see the fruit of his hard work.

Smith chose as his editor Leslie Stephen (1832-1904) to do this work. But Leslie Stephen was not fated to see the completion of the work which he had so painstakingly started. It had taken everything out of him. He suffered a severe nervous breakdown and it was the assistant editor Sidney Lee (1859-1926) who saw the work through. The effort that the DNB had taken out of Leslie Stephen is expressed in his own heart-rending words:

“That damned thing goes on like a diabolical piece of machinery, always gaping for more copy.” (*The Guardian*, February 3, 1985)

Commemorating the centenary of the DNB, *The Guardian* wrote: “It was one of those massive undertakings that only the Victorians could be megalomaniac enough to conceive, and only the Victorians could have had the energy and industriousness to carry out.”

In truth, any great undertaking requires energy and industriousness of this nature. If one is not ready to give one’s all, no worthwhile task can be achieved. An effort of such gigantic scale requires selfless devotion, utter dedication and unbounded patience. Here, one must be willing to remain obscure. One must keep on working tirelessly knowing quite well that he will not be able to see the fruit of his hard work. □



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CODE RED FOR HUMANITY

A Threat that has Become Reality

THE title of this essay echoes the words of Antonio Guterres, U.N. Secretary-General. He made this statement on August 9 after the release of an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report. The report found that the opportunity to limit the impact of climate change is rapidly narrowing. Another U.N. Climate report states that the planetary crisis is no longer a threat but our current reality.

These reports present a very grim picture of the planet we are living on. The future of humanity appears bleak in the light of recent findings presented by IPCC. The report also emphasized that climate change is of human origin and is global in nature.

The Hindu (August 17, 2021) reports: The impact of climate change on the atmosphere, oceans and land is unmistakably of human origin and this impact is picking up pace. It is a striking fact that there is no part of the inhabited world that is now untouched by the impact of global warming.

The climate change will alter many features of the world permanently. A warmer world will have a big impact on extremes of temperature and rainfall with implications for human health, ecosystem survival and sustainable economic activity. Enhanced warming is expected to amplify thawing of permafrost, and loss of seasonal snow cover, of land ice and of Arctic sea ice.

We have the world divided on the issue of climate change. A vast majority had seen it as an imminent reality, while a select few rejected it labelling it as fabricated. However, the vast evidence accumulated over the decades and our observation itself leaves no room for doubt that this indeed is the gravest concern of humankind now.

The Quran, the revealed book of God, directly addresses this issue. It says:

Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of the evil which men's hands have done: and so He will make them taste the fruit of some of their doings, so that they may turn back from evil. (30: 41)

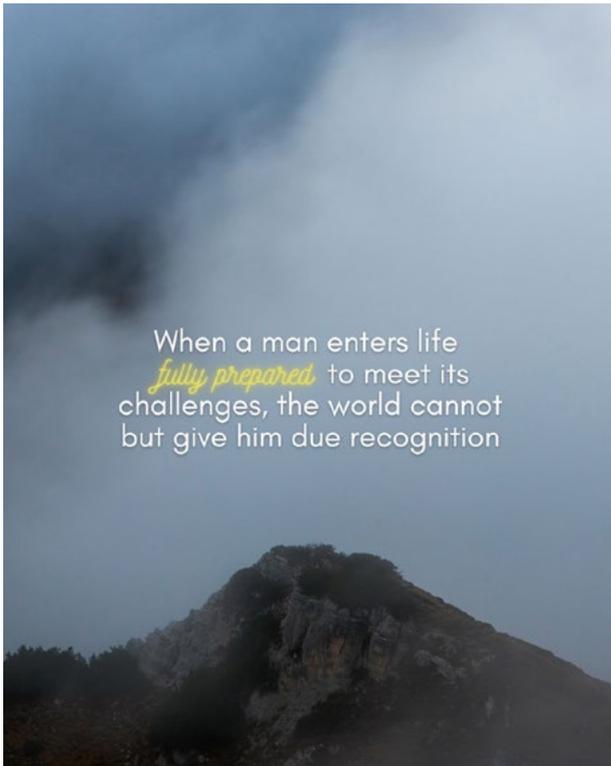
In their quest to build a paradise on earth, human beings have exploited the fruits of nature without taking care of nature. The culture of sense-gratification and right here right now have wreaked havoc on

Climate change might be the final warning for human beings to mend their ways and live according to the divine plan.

the life-support system available on earth. It is now time that human beings realize their true place in the divine scheme of things. The entire universe follows the will of God. It never transgresses the bounds set by God. The Quran says: All who dwell in heavens and on the earth submit to God alone, willingly or unwillingly. (13: 15)

According to the creation plan of God, man has been created with a free will. It means he is granted freedom to live on earth as he pleases. However, he has no control over the outcome of his actions. He is being tested in this world. After death, a new world will emerge where he will be rewarded according to the deeds he performed in his life before death.

Climate change might be the final warning for human beings to mend their ways and live according to the divine plan. □



AN INTERVIEW

UNITED Religions Initiative, North India and Afghanistan, in association with UNESCO Chair for Peace and Intercultural Understanding and Banaras Hindu University, is seeking to develop a compendium on Inter-religious/Interfaith Dialogue, Good Practices and Future Directions.

This project aims to collate and analyze innovative narratives and good practices of inter-religious/interfaith dialogue from across cultures and regions to supplement the expanding and deepening scope and outreach of UN engagement with religious entities. The project also aims to weave together the remarkable narratives, aphorisms and stories of interfaith dialogue, less accessible resources of religious peace-building, faith-inspired and interfaith social action.

Tanya Sablok is a social development and peace-building professional with a Master of Arts focused in Peace and Conflict Studies from Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Jamia Millia Islamia. She is currently working as the Cooperation Circle Liaison Officer, URI North India and Afghanistan.

She interviewed **Ms Shabina Ali**, a CPS member on July 17, 2021. Ms Shabina joined Centre for Peace and Spirituality International in 2015. She works in Kolkata and participates in programmes of peace and spirituality.

This is a selection from the interview.

While giving a brief history of CPS, please share your story by telling us about the amazing work that Honourable Late Maulana Wahiduddin Khan had been engaged in, and the contribution of CPS to the interfaith movement. Do share the various dimensions (how have scriptures become the tool of peace, how many people are connected, how do you involve diversities, etc.) of the work as you focus more on interfaith dialogue.

You would be surprised that the foundation of CPS International began on interfaith note when three youths came to meet Maulana and of the three, two were Hindus and one Muslim. They came to discuss spirituality and God. This was way back in 2001. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, being a spiritual master, immediately recognized the call of God and decided that today's youth need to be addressed for their spiritual starvation. He saw that youths are more receptive to the rational approach of religion. So he started CPS International as a platform to connect the hearts of people with one another.

The journey began with more people joining and by word-of-mouth it spread far and wide. Then, Maulana's talks began to be live streamed. It brought together people from different cities and countries. This resulted into chapters and affiliation coming into existence in various cities in India and abroad. Islamic religious scholars joined this divine mission of peace, spirituality and interfaith. Maulana and his team travelled extensively to Asia, Middle East, U.S. This outreach led to an increase in the members of CPS team across the world.

Maulana then felt the need of making the revealed Islamic scripture, i.e., the Quran easily understandable to the people of all faiths. Along with his team and fortified particularly by his daughter Dr Farida Khanam, he began the gigantic task of translating the Quran in contemporary language. The result was miraculous. This translation was well received all over the world with millions of copies already circulated. Today, CPS has more than 30 translations. Noted writer Mr Khushwant Singh said about the English translation that not only non-Muslims but Muslims should also read Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's translation. Today people of other faiths take large number of copies of Quran. It is widely distributed across public places like hotels, museums, mosques, etc.

It is difficult to provide an exact number of CPS members as this is an informal set up and the condition to become a CPS member is simple, i.e. don't harbour hate for anyone and be a well-wisher for one another. Therefore, I would say that you are interviewing me today and you are an ambassador of peace. For me, you too are a CPS member. At CPS, everyone is welcome to attend the sessions and it is not Muslim-centric.

How has the CPS contributed to building cultures of interfaith peace, and establishing interfaith dialogue?

CPS International is a non-profit, non-governmental and non-political organization established in the year 2001. CPS members come from all walks of life. Being spiritually and intellectually trained, they have taken it as their life's mission to become ambassadors of peace for the world. Many of CPS activities focus on engaging in dialogue with people of other religions in the spirit of mutual learning. They facilitate the production of translations of the Quran in different languages. They convey its message globally through interactions, addresses, researches, online activities, seminars and conferences, publication of books and articles, magazines, websites, live video feeds, Facebook Live, blogs and podcast. These activities are not confined to India alone. CPS has a commendable presence globally.

If you talk to any CPS member across chapters in India and abroad, you will find one thing common among them. They have genuine respect for people of other faiths and eagerness to learn something new. This is because through his talks and writings, Maulana inculcated in every member that the key to coexistence lies in respecting and learning from one another. There is a verse in the Quran which is very relevant in this regard: 'For you your religion, for me mine'. In other words, it means "Follow one, respect all" He always cited sayings from the Prophet that entire humanity is one, and Prophet as mentioned in the Quran was sent as a mercy to humankind. So how can we differentiate between people of different faiths?

Maulana would travel to different countries to participate in the programmes convened by Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, and Jews. Thus, he demonstrated through his life and actions that if you want a peaceful society, then the key lies in interaction, dialogue, exchange and well-wishing for one another. The same culture now runs across CPS chapters and *In Sha Allah*, we will keep this spirit alive which Maulana fostered.

Can you share some remarkable success stories that highlight the existing good practices of interfaith dialogue and peace-building?

I will begin with the example set by the Prophet of Islam when Prophet Muhammad migrated to Madinah. At that time, Madinah was a multi-religious society. When he became the political head of the city, he issued a declaration called Madinah Charter (*Sahifat-ul-Madinah*). This charter reaffirms his acceptance of the religion of Muslims for the Muslims, the religion of Jews for the Jews and the religion of the Christians for the Christians. This principle formulated by Islam is best described not as 'religious harmony' but rather as 'harmony among religious people'. So, Islamic formula is based on this principle 'Follow one and respect all'.

One extremely revolutionary example of the principle of 'Agreeing to Disagree' is found in the life of Prophet Muhammad. It concerns the conference of three religions which was held in the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah. A 60-member Christian delegation from Najd had come to Madinah to determine the situation there. A congregation of Jewish scholars followed suit. The followers of three faiths (Islam, Christianity and Judaism) gathered in one place. They carried out dialogues and discussions on various religious topics for many days. The three scriptural religions thus met in a peaceful atmosphere in Madinah. This was a truly great congress which the city of Madinah had witnessed.

The fact that today Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and people of other faiths consider themselves as CPS members shows that the effort of CPS has yielded positive results and transformation has started. One example is a team of Islamic scholars who first met Maulana. One scholar from the group said he had no hate for anyone. After scrutinizing, Maulana found out that he harboured hate for Jews. Maulana then told him that there is a *Hadith* that a person who has an iota of hate would not enter Paradise. Maulana then spoke to the person about the teachings of Islam and this changed the person and today he is one of the advocates of interfaith. CPS gets invitation from all faith groups and CPS literature is distributed and read by all faiths as Maulana's focus was on universal teachings and universal learnings. This is what Quran teaches and Islam stands for.

Kindly speak about the intersections in the interfaith dialogue that CPS has been working on, for example gender, culture, spirituality, conflict, etc. Are there any challenges? How can they be overcome?

CPS International participates regularly in the interfaith programmes. A unique aspect of CPS International is that it is spearheaded largely by women members. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan used to say that Islam gives equal status to men and women contrary to what many people think. There is a *Hadith* which says men and women are two equal halves of a single unit. 'Equal in Respect and different in role' is what Islam says. Having said that, I would like to tell you that we have many women members who participate in interfaith programmes, and are devoted to the mission.

The chairperson of CPS International is Prof Farida Khanam. Some other pivotal members who can be called pillars of the mission are Dr Naghma Siddiqui, Dr Maria Khan, Ms Stuti Malhotra. These are just a few of the women who are actively involved in this peace mission. I too participate in many programmes. I am a part of the Kolkata team.

We have produced ample material on conflict-resolution This is a theme for which Maulana worked his entire life. There is just no space for politics in religion. Maulana has created vast treasures of writings which demolish political interpretation of Islam. His writings offer principles of conflict-resolution with emphasis upon unilateral adjustment.

Maulana talks about peace for its own sake without equating it with justice. Unilateral peace is what Maulana has presented. Whatever be the situation, peace should be maintained. Otherwise, nothing can be achieved. While maintaining peace, one should pursue other matters.

His approach towards spirituality is mind-based. He talks extensively about *Marifah* which is realization of God, our Creator. The concepts of deep thinking and contemplation are the highlighting aspects that should be followed by a spiritual person.

Another very important teaching of Maulana is about converting material events into spiritual lessons.

He gives the example of how a cow converts the grass it eats into milk. Milk is a wholesome food for human beings. Maulana compares it to the phenomenon of how we should learn from this to convert negativity into positivity. There is a lesson to be learnt from the honeybee. In spite of the presence of so many different things, it just takes the nectar from the flowers and ignores everything else, thus teaching us to concentrate on the higher purpose we are born for and ignore other trivial distractions. These are some examples which are mind-boggling concepts on becoming a spiritual person.

Talking about India, Maulana said that India is a spiritual country and he envisioned India as a Spiritual Superpower.

What are the challenges for the interfaith/inter-religious dialogue/movement in the contemporary world? What are the future prospects/opportunities to connect the vision and mission with more and more people?

Future prospects and opportunities are many such as widespread distribution of peace literature in both international and national languages, engaging more people through dialogue, seminars. We believe that technology and social media is a boon for reaching out far and wide.

There is openness among people. Now, people seeking truth are in favour of communal harmony. Maulana said that every human being is a friend either potential or actual. Everyone has right to practise one's religion, and one is free to peacefully convey the message.

Covid-19 has taught an important lesson to the whole world and that is, how helpless we are as human beings. Covid-19 did not discriminate between age, gender, income group or faiths. It impacted everyone and caused a massive realization among humankind that what is the real purpose of our life. When people saw their loved ones pass away and they could do nothing, they realized that how short our lifespan is and if in this short lifespan we waste our time fighting, then we truly are eternal losers.

With the help of digital media, CPS reached out to millions carrying out the message of well-wishing, positivity, helping people understand the creation plan of God, introducing humankind to their Creator and explaining what is His expectation from us. All this was well received because they had a receiving mind after the shock of Covid-19. We realize now that today there are only opportunities and no difficulties if one does not adopt a confrontational approach. There is a verse in the Quran (41: 34) which says 'Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend.' So, choice is not between enemy and friend, but between friend and potential friend.

Yet another vector of this study is to explore the role of inter-religious/ interfaith partnerships amid the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this pandemic, many faith-based organizations and houses of worship have joined hands across religious boundaries to create strength through joint action. Would you please share some stories in this regard? How did CPS battle the challenges of the pandemic, while strengthening community relations? Were any new initiatives taken in this regard?

CPS members worldwide started using more technology as the physical movement was completely restricted. We converted our English magazine *Spirit of Islam*, and Urdu magazine *Al-Risala* into digital magazines. We undertook more translations of Maulana's work, and started participating in online meetings, launching women's WhatsApp groups, requesting all Muslims to join the peace initiatives and to follow the government directives strictly, appealing to them to know the true Islam from the scriptures.

We broadcast strong recommendations to follow social distancing and staying away from the hot-spots. People were asked not to move away from the place of an epidemic and stay put. There is a saying of the Prophet in this regard:

If you hear about an outbreak of plague in a land, do not go to it, but if the plague breaks out in a country where you are staying, do not run away from it.

During the time of Umar Farooq, the second Righteous Caliph of Islam, there was an outbreak of Bubonic plague in which thousands of Muslims died.

Caliph Umar came to know of some administrative lapses in Syria. He decided to visit the area himself and discuss the matter. So, he set out for Syria, as he got close, his companions came there to meet him.

They informed him that the plague had broken out in Amwas, a village in Palestine, which spread very fast to Syria, Iraq and Iran and had killed people in thousands. Umar then consulted his elders and an opinion was sought. It was decided that they would retreat.

Hearing this decision a Companion, Ubaidah said to Umar "Are you not fleeing from the decree of God". Umar without showing any displeasure said firmly, "Yes, we are fleeing from the decree of God to the decree of God".

Firstly, when the Covid-19 started, during the first wave, Maulana started doing daily video sessions to tell everyone to stay at home and follow the law of the land and advice of the doctors. He also sent out his message that people should not go to mosques but pray at home. He turned every one's attention towards God and made people realize that we should focus on the blessings of God.

Continuous writings, talks, Zoom interactions instilled feelings of hope among all followers. We all took this catastrophe in the sense that God has given a reminder to humanity that we should be taking one another as being a well-wisher and at the same time acknowledge God as our Creator. This continuous dose of spirituality not only gave hope to everyone but we stepped up our reach through digital push. Our magazines, social media pages and Zoom sessions had a tremendous reach. People were at home and had time at hand.

Acknowledging the great work that is being done in this interfaith movement, is there scope to do more especially after the pandemic? What has changed and what is the way forward?

Pandemic has taught us that a new world order has emerged. This has taught that the concept of 'we and they' is no longer viable. 'We and they' approach will not work. Problem can be solved together and a peaceful world can also be built together. We have seen so many stories of faith-based organization coming forward to help people and not only to their communities. There is tremendous scope to work together and promote the universal teachings of each other's faith and learn and grow. Youths of today are the hope of tomorrow as they do not believe in being categorized under a faith denomination. We should work more on youths and that is a great scope. At CPS, we are focussing on that segment as we feel they are lot less conditioned.

The pandemic has sort of brought people to think about the reality of life, the purpose of our existence, opened our eyes towards being responsible citizens, an alertness in us and brought lessons on how to be sensitive to the issue of taking care of the environment and not to exploit its resources in an irresponsible way, contribute to taking nature seriously and making people aware of our role. Maulana always emphasized on the harmony and how nature works at tandem with human beings.

What are the future directions in the work being done to further the goal of interfaith peace, dialogue and spirituality?

Our Ideology is based on:

- Win the mind and you have won the battle
- addressing the individual because after all a group of individual constitutes a society
- promoting our peace literature in every way possible
- Conducting one-to-one session to help people understand the importance of peaceful coexistence

Often the problem occurs when the so-called religious leaders misinterpret the scriptures and mislead people. Their motto is usually “Bulldoze them all”. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan gave us the future direction by giving the right slogan “Impress them all”.

His approach is to present the teachings of religion with the positive and right perspective. Just like UNESCO dictum says ‘violence begins from mind’, so, peace also begins from mind. Similarly, the same scripture which these so-called leaders twist to mislead, we use the same scriptures to bond with people of faith by presenting its true interpretation.

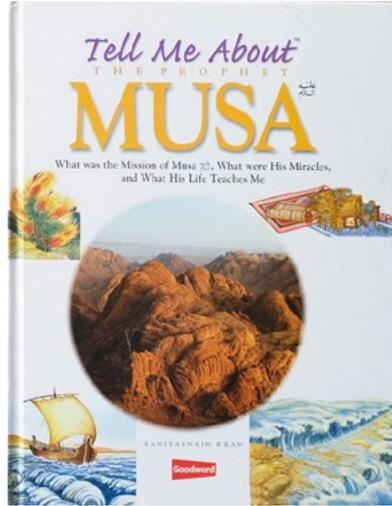
All we have to do is to address the minds of the youths and across gender to inculcate it in their daily life. Once a person transforms oneself, then they automatically begin to exude interfaith qualities and become giver members of the society. □



CHILDREN'S CORNER

Selections from Best-Loved Quran Stories

Goodword is an award-winning publishing company with a splendid range of Islamic Books in many languages. It offers innovative products for children, including Quran stories, moral stories, craft and activity books, gift packs, Islamic games, Arabic and Islamic readers for home and school. Enjoy a selection of two chapters from the book **Tell Me About The Prophet Musa**. It is authored by Dr Saniyasain Khan. He is recognized as one of the world's most influential Muslims¹. This book presents the life and times of the Prophet Musa, upon whom be peace, from the days of his infancy, when he was put in a box in the river Nile, to the period of his divine mission and preaching of Allah's words.



A Box in the River

As the soft ripples of water carried the box containing the little Musa slowly and gently his sister kept a watch on it. To her utter surprise, the waves pushed the box slowly towards the royal palace. A member of Firawn's household noticed the box bobbing by the shore, and brought it to Queen Asiya, the wife of the tyrant Firawn.

The queen was not a cruel person like her husband; she was a kind-hearted and loving woman. When the box was opened and she saw the little soul lying there, she exclaimed: "This is such a lovely child that whoever sees him cannot help but love him." The news of the box containing a new born baby spread through the palace. When Firawn heard, he guessed that this must be the act of a woman from the Children of Israel, who was trying to save her child from his order to kill every new-born baby boy. Firawn ordered that the child be put to death immediately. But Queen Asiya pleaded with her husband: "This child may bring joy to us both. Do not slay him." The queen wanted to keep this baby boy. "He may show promise, and we may adopt him as our

1. *The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims 2020*, Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Jordan.

son,” Queen Asiya said. Firawn trembled with rage that anyone would dare to disagree with him. But finally the queen’s strong arguments touched his heart. In the end, Firawn relented and agreed that the child should be brought up in the palace under the queen’s care.

Firawn Is Drowned

No sooner did Firawn and his whole army reach the middle of the sea, than the waves standing obediently on either side like huge walls were returned to their original form by Allah’s order and fell on them. Firawn and all his army were crushed and drowned in the raging seas.

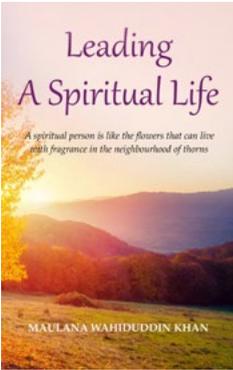
Seeing his tragic end, Firawn realized that he had been wrong about Musa and his message. At the last moment Firawn turned to Allah and cried out: “Now, I believe that no god exists except Allah in whom the Children of Israel believe. To Him I give up myself.” But Allah rejected his last-minute confession, “Only now! But before this you were a rebel and a wrongdoer.” (10: 90-91) After Firawn drowned, his dead body was apparently taken out of the sea and, according to the old Egyptian custom, was mummified.

As the people looked on at the destruction of the Egyptians from the safety of the Sinai Peninsula, Musa encouraged them not to forget this day. “Remember Allah’s goodness to you when He delivered you from Firawn’s nation, who had oppressed you cruelly, putting your sons to death and sparing only your daughters. Surely that was a great trial from your Lord. For He had declared: ‘If you give thanks, I will bestow abundance upon you: but if you deny My favours, My punishment shall be terrible indeed.’” Musa warned the Children of Israel: “If you and all mankind prove thankless, He does not need your thanks, though He deserves your praise.” (14: 6-8) □



Everyone is in search of God. It is God who gives meaning to all phenomena, because, after finding God, Everything falls into place.

BOOK REVIEW



Name of the Book: Leading a Spiritual Life

Author: Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Published by: Goodword Books, New Delhi (India) (www.goodwordbooks.com)

Year: 2016

Pages: 394

ISBN: 9391481027

Reviewed by: Roshan Shah

L*Leading a Spiritual Life* is a compilation of essays of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan that have appeared over the years in *The Speaking Tree* of *The Times of India*. It lays out a universal vision of spiritual living that can easily appeal to people of all faiths (or of none in particular) and that is not restricted by the dogmas and rituals, names and forms that have come to be associated with different religions as they have been historically interpreted.

The Maulana makes an immensely valuable contribution in refining our understanding of spirituality. Positive thinking is at the very root of the spirituality that he talks about. It is based on realizing and acknowledging the existence of the Creator through reflection on the amazing universe. This connection with the Creator is to be expressed in relating positively with the creation in one's daily life. To live in this way on an everyday basis is to lead a spiritual life.

With the help of instances from his own life and that of others, including 'ordinary' folk and 'noted' people from different parts of the world and references from the Christian, Hindu and Islamic traditions as well as everyday events as reported in newspapers, the Maulana brilliantly explains how spirituality is all about avoiding negativity and living our ordinary lives in a positive and truly meaningful manner, leading to inner as well as outer transformation. Spirituality, we learn from the Maulana, is not something enormously difficult which is meant only for a select few. Nor is it something esoteric or mysterious. Nor, too, is it about simply clinging on to some dogmas or ritual practices. Spirituality is not renouncing the world or self-absorbed meditation

that is indifferent to the outside world. Nor does it consist of simply performing some physical or other such exercises. Nor, too, is it trying to achieve some ecstatic or emotional condition. Rather, authentic spirituality is about leading our everyday lives in an authentic—that is, positive—way, based on intellectual development. It is about refining our minds and, accordingly, our behaviour, through imbibing spiritual lessons drawn from reflecting on everything that we see, feel, hear or otherwise experience in our lives. The spirituality that the Maulana articulates is a mind-based, rather than a heart-based one, being based on reflection on and contemplation of the world around us.

Here are some excerpts from the book:

- It is the honeybee's culture to fly out from its hive every day and reach places where flowers are available for it. The bee extracts nectar from the flower and returns to its abode. It pays no heed to anything else.
- Where there are flowers, there are also other things like thorns; but the honeybee simply ignores the presence of those thorns and does not waste time in complaining about them. It simply extracts the nectar from the flowers and returns to the hive.
- This behaviour of the honeybee provides a symbolic lesson for man—'Live like the honeybee'. That is, extract what is good for you and leave what is unwanted. Do not waste your time in complaints and protests.
- Every single experience that we go through, even the seemingly most negative or difficult, the Maulana explains, is of great potential spiritual value, because we can draw a spiritual lesson from it and thereby develop our minds.

The Maulana has brilliant advice for us to tackle difficulties that inevitably come our way almost every day. The key to remaining positive in such conditions, he says, is to change our way of viewing them. Instead of taking them to be problems and fret about them, we can view them as challenges that can help us become stronger and more resilient, confident and wise. As the Maulana explains:

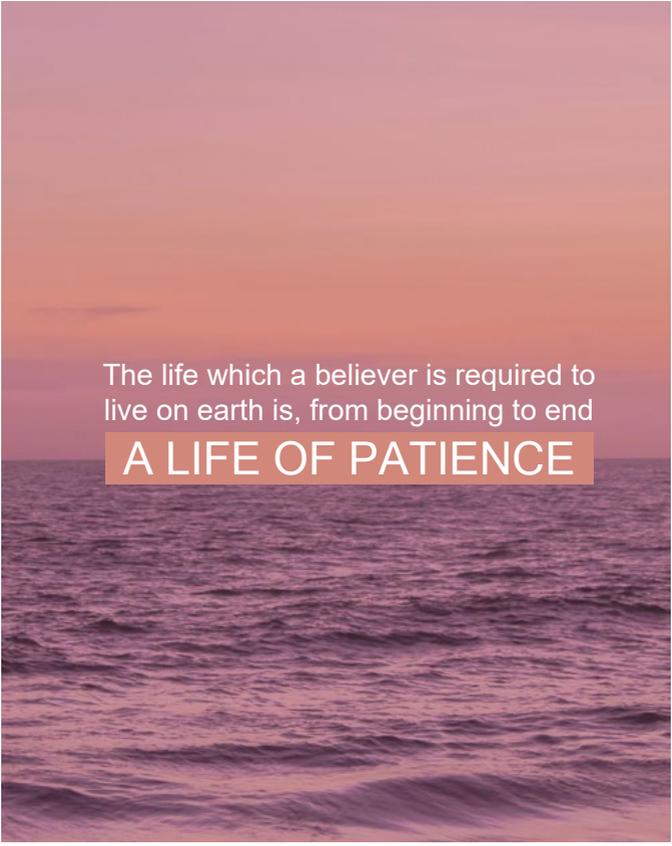
Life is full of unwanted experiences. There is no one who is not destined to travel through a jungle of problems. It is the destiny of every man and woman. The question is: what is the formula to deal with this?

The only successful formula is: Don't take things as an evil. Take them as a challenge. If you take things as evil, you will simply develop a negative

attitude, and a negative attitude will only increase your problems. But if you take untoward situations as a challenge, this attitude will unfold the hidden capacity of your mind. You will be able to face all challenges bravely and intelligently, and sooner or later, reach your destination.

With the help of real-life examples, the Maulana explains that the key to happiness is to learn to adjust to situations, to accept reality as it is, to discover and focus on the positive even in seemingly very negative circumstances, to never lose hope, and to discern the opportunities that always exist, even in what may appear the most difficult situation.

This book is a masterpiece and is definitely among the best-written books on spirituality that I've read so far. It expresses deep truths in an immensely appealing conversational mode. Providing invaluable guidance for leading a truly meaningful life, it deserves to be very widely read and to be translated into various languages. □



The life which a believer is required to
live on earth is, from beginning to end

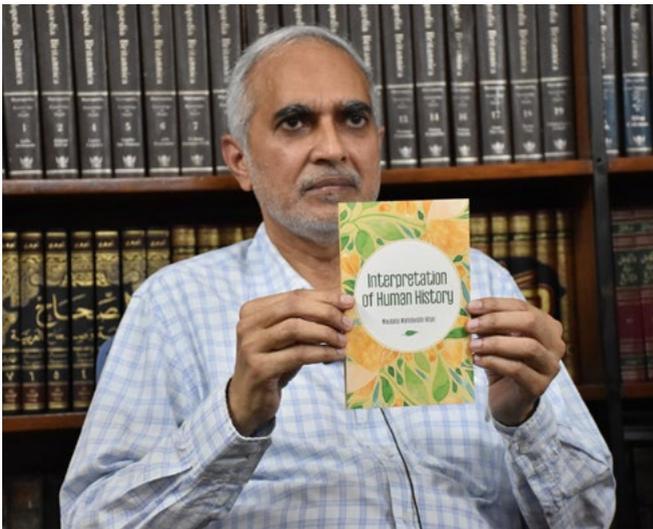
A LIFE OF PATIENCE

CPS NEWSLETTER

FIVE books were launched in June and July. These books are authored by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan.

- God-Oriented Life
- Remembrance of God
- Attributes of God
- Interpretation of Human History
- Islam and Human Welfare

These books are available for free download on www.cpsglobal.org



- A Marathi translation of Maulana's award-winning book *Muhammad: A Prophet for All Humanity* was released. It is titled *Muhammad (S.A.W.): Samast Manvatesathi Antim Preshit*. The project was guided to fruition by the Pune and Mumbai chapters of CPS International.

- The live stream of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's address has been going on since 2001. Sunday classes have been resumed now after the illness and demise of Maulana. This class is now addressed by Prof. Farida Khanam, Dr. Saniyasnain Khan and Dr. Rajat Malhotra.
- 100 news videos have been posted on the YouTube channel of CPS International.
- Ms Sarah Fathima, Ms Fahmida Khan and Dr Maria Khan address online classes weekly.
- Timely articles penned by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan and CPS members are published in *The Times of India*, *The Speaking Tree* blog and newspaper, *The Sunday Guardian*, *Soulveda* and *Yours Positively* along with being posted on cpsglobal.org.
- A dedicated podcast channel *Spiritual Message* (https://bit.ly/spiritual_podcast) was launched. This podcast is now available on Google Podcast, Apple Podcast, Spotify and many others podcast apps.
- CPS USA Chapter head, Mr. Khaja Kaleemuddin visited Brazil and formed *dawah* teams. His Quran distribution experience is available from the link: <https://www.cpsusa.net/post/an-outreach-journey-to-brazil>
- Mohammad Asad Parvez, CPS USA member gifted the Quran and Maulana's books to the Mayor of Boston, Kim Janey. She is the first woman mayor of Boston in history and also the first person of colour to hold the office. □

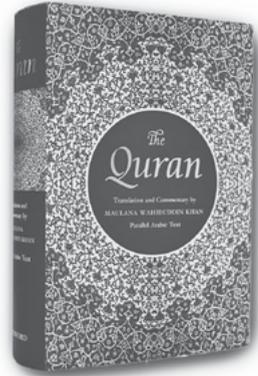


THE WORD OF GOD

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



Believers, do not devour usury multiplied many times over. Fear God, so that you may prosper—guard yourself against the Fire prepared for those who deny the truth—and obey God and the Messenger, so that you may be given mercy. And vie with one another for your Lord's forgiveness and for a Paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, which has been prepared for the God-fearing, for those who spend, both in prosperity and adversity, who restrain their anger and are forgiving towards their fellow men—God loves those who do good works. 3: 130-134

Engaging in usury is the ultimate in money worship. A usurer thinks day in and day out as to how to double and quadruple his money. But what he ought to pursue relentlessly is not the acquisition of material things but his entry into Paradise in the Hereafter. He ought to be ever eager to attain God's mercy and blessing, but not by increasing his worldly wealth in order to guarantee himself a life of grandeur in this world. Honour and success are of no importance when compared to Paradise, the pleasure and enjoyment of which are immeasurable. Wise is the one who pursues God's Paradise. Hastening towards it means giving away more and more of one's wealth for the cause of God. The way to worldly success is to increase one's riches, while the way to success in the Hereafter is to decrease one's riches. If the inspiration to tread the former path is the love of money, the inspiration towards the latter is the love of God and His Messenger. If the 'wealth' of the former is worldly profit, the 'wealth' of the latter is the profit of the Hereafter. Where those desirous of riches have the fear of worldly loss, those of a spiritual bent of mind fear loss in the Hereafter.

And who, when they have committed an indecency or have wronged their souls, remember God and pray that their sins be forgiven—for who but God can forgive sins?—and do not knowingly persist in their misdeeds, their recompense is forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens with rivers flowing through them, where they will abide forever. How excellent will be the reward of those who do good works. There are many examples [of the communities] that have passed away before you: travel through the land, and see what was the end of those who rejected the Truth. This Quran is an exposition for the people and a guidance and admonition for those who fear God.

3:135-138

Those who fear God lead their lives as if God is watching over them, that is, as if all their actions are performed so as to be more and more pleasing in the eyes of God. Instead of leading a life of licentiousness, they lead a life of constraint. The requirements of the religion of God become their own requirements and for that they spend in charity under all circumstances, irrespective of whether they have much or little. When enraged, they control themselves. When there is a cause for complaint, they forgive instead of reacting negatively. They too fall into error, but that is only temporary. They immediately realize their mistake and return to God, spontaneously invoking His forgiveness and seeking His mercy. Whatever has been stated verbally in the Quran is borne out by the events of Islamic history. But advice is heeded only by those who are keen to have it. □



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If you encounter any issue regarding the presentation of material on the Spirit of Islam website (www.spiritofislam.co.in), please mail in your suggestions or questions to usman_888@yahoo.com.

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.

Miss Sarah Bancroft is the associate editor of *Independent*, an English newspaper published from London. She visited New Delhi in the last week of April 2002. Through Mr Muhammad Khalid Ansari (*Hindustan Times*), she sent us a questionnaire. The below are the answers that were emailed to her.

What is the purpose of man's existence?

What is the purpose of man's existence in this world, to understand this question, we should first know what the creation plan of God is. According to the Quran, God created an ideal world called Paradise. This is an eternal and perfect world where man will get everything that he desires. This world with its limitations and imperfections is a selection ground. Here, those people are being selected who will prove worthy to be settled in the eternal world after death.

Studies show that man is such a creation which has exceptionally unlimited capacity. The busiest or the most successful of human beings, however, could hardly utilize 2% of this capacity. The reason being that this world with its limitations does not offer unending opportunities to human beings to live life utilizing the full capacity.

According to this study, there is a difference in human capacity and the world that can be made full use of. This difference is an indication that there must be another world where man could obtain total fulfilment, where man could live his life utilizing his full potential. It is like a psychological proof that apart from this limited world, there indeed is an unlimited and perfect world. Paradise is the other name for this world.

According to this creation plan, the status of this world is of a preliminary selection ground. It is a place where those people are being selected who will prove by their words and deeds that they are worthy of being settled in the perfect world of Paradise.

Once our body perishes, where exactly the life-force that leaves the body goes?

The death of a human being is the death of his body. It is not the death of his soul. Human personality is changelessness in change. According to Islam, when a person dies, he leaves his material body and enters the next world where he could live eternally with a new and better body.

Man being caught up in a whirlpool, where each philosophy claims to be the ultimate one, how can we be sure of a particular form or shape of life after this?

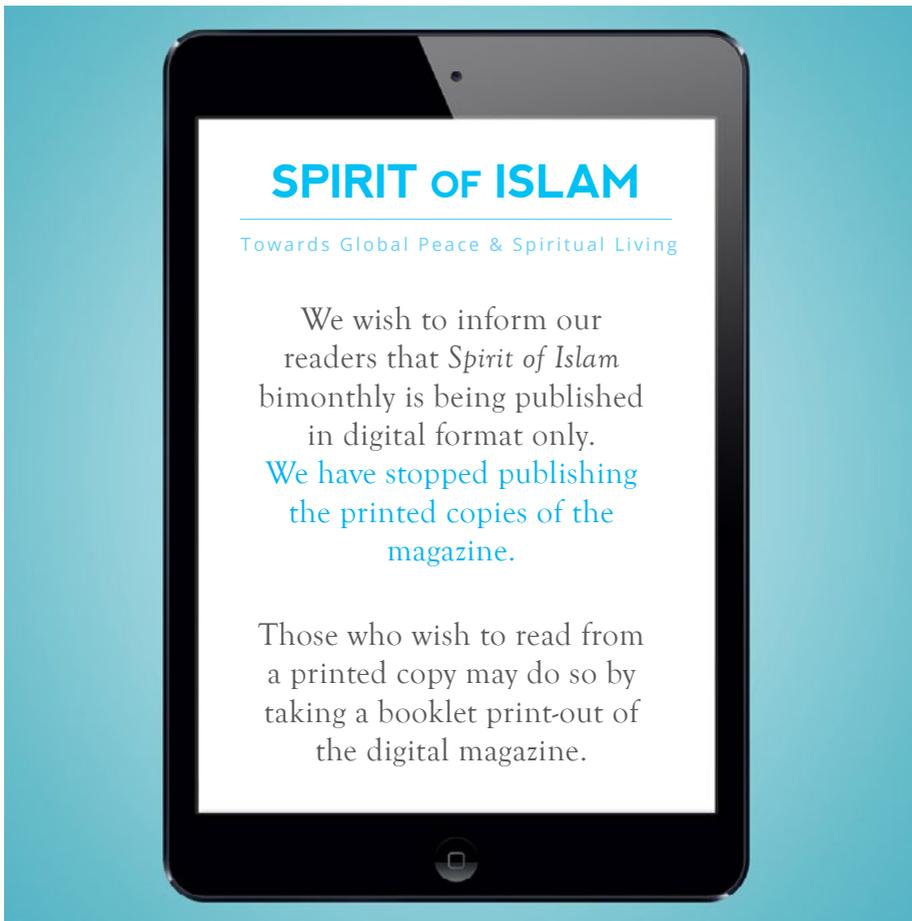
The concept of whirlpool is an imaginative ideology devised by some philosophers. There is no such concept in the ideology of life presented by Islam. Islam says that it is not that all human souls are being gathered like a whirlpool in a state of perplexity and confusion. According to Islam, every person has an individuality. Every person has his own unique existence. According to one's words and deeds, a person is developing his personality, which may be either good or bad. This personality development is being recorded. Based on this record, he shall receive good or bad outcome in the Hereafter.

If this is not the real face of Islam, then what real Islam is?

Islamic ideology of life is different from those presented in philosophy and other existing religions. Islamic ideology of life is based wholly on the principle of test. It means the present world is a testing ground. This is a place to develop one's personality. Here, man is given freedom to pass through various experiences and thereby prepare himself. He is expected to respond positively to negative situations, even in untoward situations; he should prove to be a person of lofty morals; he should remain unaffected by fleeting emotions and concentrate on his future; he should disentangle himself from the spurs of the moment and live in the eternal realities; despite his freedom, he should subjugate his ego before God; instead of leading a self-oriented life, he should lead a God-oriented life; instead of exerting his energy to build his world here, he should make the building of the Hereafter his target.

Could you suggest some useful reading material that, while providing better intellectual conviction, can supercede the existing philosophy (be it Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism, etc.) about the existence of man?

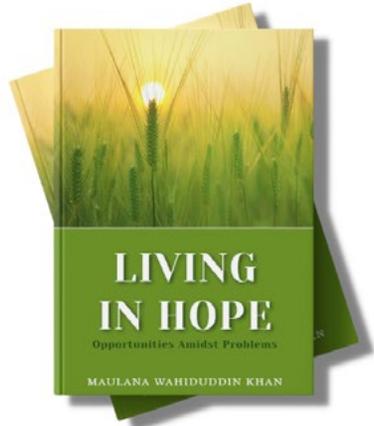
One should study the Quran and the books of *Hadith* (teachings of Prophet Muhammad) to understand Islam. Apart from the Quran and books of *Hadith*, many books have been written to introduce and explain Islam. One among these is a book written by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. It is titled *Islam Rediscovered*. □



NEW
RELEASE

The book explains that according to the creation plan of God, this world is a world of possibilities and not a world of frustration. In the events of the life of man, from every failure emerges the chance of new success.

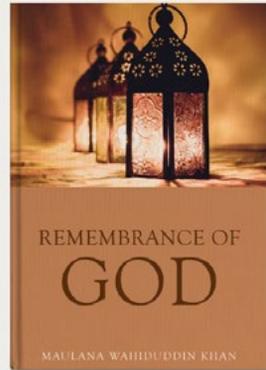
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NEW
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Remembrance of God is the greatest form of worship. Remembering God means that whatever a person sees or whatever he experiences, he should make it a point of reference for the remembrance of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

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