

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



Seeing a problem as a problem is the problem. If you see a problem as a normal event, there will be no problem.

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

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

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

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

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

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



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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

ISSUE 79 JULY 2019

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002, HM WIMBERLY, 6, BERLIE STREET CROSS
LANGFORD TOWN, BENGALURU 560025, INDIA


PRINTED AT

COSMOS PRINTERS AND PUBLISHERS
450, 3RD CROSS, WILSON GARDEN, BENGALURU 560027

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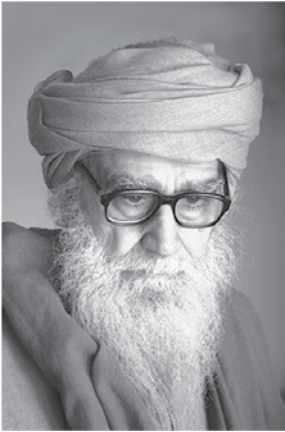
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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

POLITICAL POWER: A RESPONSIBILITY

Power is not a Worldly Blessing; it is a Test set by God.

SOLOMON, an Israelite prophet as well as a king, was the ruler of Palestine and Syria. While engaged in trying to win over the Queen of Sheba in both the political and religious sense, he asked for the throne of the Queen of Sheba to be brought to him. The queen and her throne were hundreds of miles away at that time, but he had been endowed with special powers, he expected his order to have immediate effect. The Quran refers to how Solomon responded to his order being instantly complied with in the chapter *Al-Naml* (The Ants). The relevant verse is as follows: "But one of them who had some knowledge of the Book said, 'I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye.' When Solomon saw it placed before him, he exclaimed, 'This is by the grace of my Lord, to test whether I am grateful or ungrateful. Whosoever is grateful, it is for the good of his own self; and whosoever is ungrateful, then surely my Lord is self-sufficient and generous.'" (27: 40)

This verse illustrates the Quranic concept of political power, it is not a kind of a worldly blessing; it is a test set by God.

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

Just as everything that one possesses in this world is a test, so also is political power a test paper. God Almighty is constantly watching the behaviour of the ruler to ascertain whether he is just or unjust in performing his duties. A king is accountable before God just as the common man is. According to this Quranic concept, political power is a responsibility rather than a blessing. The possession of political power does not mean that the ruler is a superior person.

Whosoever is grateful, it is for the good of his own self; and whosoever is ungrateful, then surely my Lord is self-sufficient and generous.

Without a boss you cannot run a company, without a prime minister you cannot run a government, without the head of the family you cannot run a home, without a coordinator, or a supervisor, you cannot run a joint effort. Adherence to the principle of leadership is an integral part of any successful joint effort. This being so, the law of nature set forth in the above Quranic verse is a great blessing for us. God Almighty created people with differences or disparities. It is this difference or disparity that gives us the opportunity to bow to the principle of leadership in our social activities.

Every train requires an engine for its smooth running. Without an engine, the train would not be able to budge an inch. The same is true of society. Society is like a train which we need to mobilize, but this mobilization cannot be achieved without an engine to lead the way. The same formula that requires physical movement is applicable to social movement; the social train cannot travel towards its goal without an engine. Therefore a secondary role of being followers is not an inferior role; it is a role that has a value higher than that of the person primarily in command. The commander will be given only one credit but those who accept the secondary role will be rewarded with double credit because, apart from their normal role, they have proved to have a great ability—ego management. Without learning the art of ego management, no one can successfully play the secondary role.

What should be the behaviour of the subjects or citizens in society in order to be good followers?

According to the Quran, all human beings are born with two opposite moral constituents. These are *al-nafs al-ammara* and *al-nafs al-lawwama*. In psychological terms, they are the ego and the conscience—with which everyone is born. Almost all human behaviour is affected by these two features. Negative behaviour is

the result of *al-nafs al-ammara* and positive behaviour is the result of *al-nafs al-lawwama*. The ego, if left uncontrolled becomes the source of all evil, for it is a highly inflammable part of man. In a normal situation, it remains in a dormant state, but when one's ego is negatively touched, it becomes superego and the result is breakdown. The best way to avoid an ego problem is not to provoke it. In the absence of provocation, the ego creates no problem. But provoke the ego and it is like setting a lighted match to a powder keg. By contrast, the conscience is the source of all kinds of good. The conscience checks you from indulging in any evil practices, and if you do indulge in any kind of misdemeanour, the conscience becomes alive and compels you to repent and amend your behaviour. The conscience in this way serves as a corrective to every human personality. This means whenever there is any controversy, the outcome is in your own hands.

Society is like a train which we need to mobilize, but this mobilization cannot be achieved without an engine to lead the way.

A man with a mission always perseveres and avoids hindrances: This principle is very important; it saves you from unnecessary conflict. It gives you the opportunity to continue your mission in society without a break. It saves you from wasting your energy and time in futile quarrels.

It shows great practical wisdom. And without practical wisdom, you cannot achieve any worthy goal in this world. A man with a mission cannot afford to engage in unnecessary conflict. As a man of dedication, he is determined about achieving his target. He always starts his activities in properly selected fields and never behaves like a grasshopper, jumping from one thing to another. □

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In a normal situation anyone can adhere to moral values, but the real test of a worthy person is his having the capacity to speak with justice even in difficult situations.

FROM THE EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Dr. Farida Khanam has been a professor at the Department of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi. A Study of World's Major Religions, A Simple Guide to Sufism are two of the books amongst others, of which she is the author. She has also translated many books on Islam authored by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. Currently, the chairperson of Centre for Peace and Spirituality (CPS International), an organization founded by her father Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, she is a regular contributor of articles to journals, newspapers and magazines. Dr. Khanam has edited Maulana's English translation of the Quran and has also translated his Urdu commentary of the Quran into English. Under Maulana Wahiduddin Khan Peace Foundation, along with the CPS team, she has designed a series of courses on peace-building, countering extremism and conflict resolution.

PIOUS CALIPHATE

THE FIRST four Caliphs after the Prophet are known as the 'Rightly Guided Caliphs'. They were successors of the Prophet in the real sense of the word. They were all senior Companions of the Prophet. They were chosen by the Muslims for their closeness to the Prophet and for their outstanding character. They were humble, unselfish, tolerant, God-fearing, and well-versed in the Quran. They remained in close touch with the people. They refused to take any luxuries for themselves.

Masters of a vast empire, they continued to lead simple lives just as the Prophet had done before them. During the 30 years of their rule, Islam made great progress. This period of Islamic rule is the golden period of justice and fair play. That is why these Caliphs are called rightly guided, for they ruled the people of their time exactly in accordance with the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet. They considered themselves as simple servants of God.

Abu Bakr As-Siddiq—The First Caliph (632-34)

Abu Bakr was a rich merchant of Makkah, belonging to the Quraysh tribe. At the time when Muhammad was endowed with prophethood, Abu Bakr had gone to Yemen on business. When he came back, people immediately came to him to give him the 'strange' news of Muhammad

receiving revelations through Gabriel. Having been the Prophet's close friend since boyhood (born in Makkah in AD 573, he was just three years younger than the Prophet), Abu Bakr was too keenly aware of the sincerity and truthfulness of the Prophet to have any misgivings.

However, on hearing this news, Abu Bakr went to see the Prophet, and asked him about the message of this religion that he was preaching. Having unshakeable faith in the Prophet, he accepted Islam without any second thoughts. That is why he was given the title *As-Siddiq* (the upright) by the Prophet. He was thus the first male to embrace Islam, and was one of the Prophet's oldest supporters. Abu Bakr's father, Usman, (better known as Abu Qahafa) and his mother, Salma, had named him Abdul Kaaba, meaning "the servant of the Kaaba". But when he embraced Islam, the Prophet changed this pagan name to Abdullah and gave him the surname of Abu Bakr.

Even prior to Islam, Abu Bakr had been respected for his good moral character. He was honest and truthful and had good relations with everyone. The Quraysh trusted him and consulted him for solutions to their problems. Now, after having accepted Islam, he began to spread the word of God in his own social circle. As a result of his efforts, some very promising and talented people accepted Islam, most of whom were his friends. They were—Usman ibn Affan, Zubayr ibn al-Awam, Abdur Rahman ibn Auf, Saad ibn Abi Waqqas, Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah, Khalid ibn Sayeed, etc.

When the Quraysh came to know of his role in the spread of Islam, they turned against him and began to persecute him. But he patiently bore all their oppression and faithfully stood by the Prophet amidst all perils. He spent all his wealth in the cause of Islam.

It was because of his sincerity and dedication to the cause of Islam that the Prophet chose him to accompany him when he migrated from Makkah to Madinah. His self-sacrificing friendship and his devotion to the cause of Islam was rewarded by his name being immortalized in the Quran as "the second of the two." (9: 40)

Soon after the Prophet and Abu Bakr migrated to Madinah, in obedience to a divine injunction, the Muslims then left their home and hearth for Madinah. But the Quraysh did not allow them to rest in peace even in Madinah. They waged many battles in their bid to uproot the Muslims

***Without knowledge,
action is useless and
knowledge without
action is futile.
— Abu Bakr***

from the city. Abu Bakr took part in all these defensive battles. He was always with the Prophet and accompanied him on all his campaigns. He never showed any weakness, always standing like a rock by the side of the Prophet.

Tabuk was the last expedition of the Prophet of Islam. He asked people to give generously in aid of it. Abu Bakr was the only person to give all he had to the cause of Islam. The Prophet asked him whether he had anything left for his wife and children. He replied that God and His apostle were enough for them. No one could surpass him so far as selfless service to Islam was concerned. Not only was he the first man to accept Islam, but he was also the foremost among the Muslims to uphold the cause of God.

If an ignorant person is attracted by the things of the world, that is bad. But if a learned person is thus attracted, it is worse. — Abu Bakr

After Makkah was conquered, the Prophet sent Abu Bakr in 631 to Makkah to lead the Hajj on behalf of the Prophet. Abu Bakr read the customary sermon (*Khutba*) of Hajj.

Ever since the Prophet had arrived in Madinah, he had been in the habit of leading the prayer himself. During his last illness, the Prophet became so incapacitated that he could not come to the mosque for this purpose. The Prophet then asked Abu Bakr to conduct the prayer in the mosque and to lead the Muslims

in his stead. Aisha, who was Abu Bakr's daughter and the wife of the Prophet, thought that her tender-hearted father would not be able to bear this burden. She therefore requested the Prophet to ask someone else to perform this duty. But the Prophet did not change his mind.

Thus, in the lifetime of the Prophet, Abu Bakr came to fill the highest office. This distinction made it possible for Umar and his friends, after the Prophet's death in 632, to propose Abu Bakr as the head of the community. Abu Bakr thus became Caliph (the successor of the Prophet) by the general consent of the people.

Thanks to his simple but firm character, he was able to lead the young Muslim community successfully through the most difficult times. After the death of the Prophet, a number of the Arab tribes revolted. Most of them had embraced Islam after the conquest of Makkah in AD 629-630 and had not had the opportunity to undergo any proper training by the Prophet. Being used to a free and easy life, they found such Islamic injunctions as *zakat* (compulsory alms-giving) and *jihad* more

than they could stand. They were under the impression that, after the Prophet, God's succour too had come to an end.

But Abu Bakr did not let the situation get out of hand. He dealt with them firmly, having chosen the brave general Khalid ibn al-Walid as the commander of his forces. He successfully suppressed all revolts and brought all the Arabian tribes under the control of Islam.

Abu Bakr treated the vanquished mercifully. This helped re-establish peace in the country. Arabia was brought under control within less than a year. Later, Abu Bakr sent Khalid and other able generals on a campaign against Persia and Byzantine.

By resorting to these measures, Abu Bakr very successfully brought about much-needed unity among the Muslim community. During his short rule, the Arabian army saw several victories. Al-Hira in Persia was conquered in 633.

Soon after, Abu Bakr fell victim to a fatal illness in AD 634. On his death bed what Abu Bakr feared more than anything was division among the Muslims. He wanted to make sure that no difference should divide them after he was gone. After much thought, he decided to nominate Umar as his successor. When he put his choice before the senior Companions, they all approved of it. When all of the Companions had agreed to this, he went ahead with the nomination.

Our abode in this world is transitory, our life therein is but a loan, our breaths are numbered and our indolence is manifest.
— Abu Bakr

Abu Bakr passed away two weeks after the appointment of Umar. According to his wish, he was buried by the side of the Prophet, and his body was wrapped in the same old clothes in which he had died. His rule had lasted for two years and three months.

Abu Bakr had lived a very simple and modest life. He had had neither servants nor bodyguards. He used to come early in the morning to the Prophet's mosque to carry out the duties of the state and to perform the congregational prayers. He even did routine chores at home, sweeping the floor, feeding and milking the goats, etc.

Abu Bakr lived and worked for Islam till his last breath. Although his rule lasted only for two years, three months and ten days—a very short span of time for a nation—he had been able to perform great feats. One of the many great contributions made by Abu Bakr was the collection and collation of the Quran in codex form. His achievements have rendered his name immortal.

Umar ibn al-Khattab—The Second Caliph (634-44)

Umar ibn Khattab, the second Caliph is the founder of the Arab empire. He was born in pagan Makkah. He embraced Islam through the efforts of his sister Fatimah, four years before the migration to Madinah. He was completely opposed to the Prophet at first. He had actually set out to kill him. But while on his way, someone told him that his sister and her husband had become Muslims. On hearing the most shocking news he diverted his course, and rushed to his sister's home in great fury. At that moment Fatimah was reading some passage from the Quran. She tried to hide that section of the Quran as she saw him coming. But Umar burst into the house without giving them any time and began beating his brother-in-law. His sister too got wounded while attempting to protect her husband. Umar saw blood oozing from their faces. On seeing these wounds, Umar calmed down. He took the text from her and read it himself. He was so greatly moved by these divine words that he asked them to take him to Muhammad immediately to proclaim his acceptance of Islam.

Islam will be destroyed by the mistakes of scholars, the arguments of the hypocrites who misinterpret the Quran to support their views and misleading rulers.
— Umar ibn al-Khattab

As soon as he joined the believers, the community became very strong. He was famed for his bravery, intelligence and was endowed with a towering personality. Although he held no official position, he became the real organizer of the newly formed community of the believers. He became one of the Prophet's chief advisors. His part was in fact more of a counsellor than of a soldier, although he did take part in the battles.

Umar was so exceptionally gifted by nature that the power after Abu Bakr naturally passed on to him. Although he was nominated by Abu Bakr, the majority of the Companions accepted him as Caliph without any hesitation. He held this office from AD 634 to 644.

When Umar assumed power, the great expansion by conquest had already begun. Umar himself had contributed to it especially in his capacity as advisor to Abu Bakr.

It is one of his greatest achievements that he brought the fiercely independent Bedouins under control and executed his plans of expansion so successfully. All the generals were under his full control. One of his uncanny ability lay in recognizing the talents of people. Umar would unmistakably choose that person and employ him for the

job he was best suited for. For example, he made maximum use of the Umayyad family in the execution of his plans for the spread of Islam.

During his reign, the Muslims, under Khalid the celebrated general, conquered Persia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt. In Jerusalem, the Christian ruler Sophronius set a condition for surrender—that only if Caliph Umar comes there in person and signs the treaty of peace only then they would surrender. The Caliph therefore set out in 637 for Jerusalem with one servant and a camel. Since there was only one camel, he and his servants rode the camel by turns. It happened that on the day they were to reach Jerusalem it was the turn of the servant. The servant insisted on giving his turn to him saying that it will look awkward that the servant is riding and the Caliph leading the camel. But Umar thought it was not according to the spirit of justice so he refused to do so.

Do not be fooled by one who recites the Quran. His recitation is but speech—but look to those who act according to it.
— Umar ibn al-Khattab

When the Palestinians saw the Caliph of a vast empire in rough, patched cloak, walking on foot with no grain of pride and haughtiness, they threw their gates open to welcome him into the Holy City.

Umar signed the peace treaty with the Christians of Jerusalem, granted them full religious freedom to practise their religion and full state protection.

Umar adopted the title of *Amir al-Muminin* (Leader of the believers) rather than the *Khalifah Rasul Allah* (deputy of the messenger of God) as Abu Bakr was called. He also instituted the *Hijrah* (migration) to mark the commencement of the Muslim calendar (622 CE). He instituted *Diwan-e-Ata*, which gave out stipends to all Muslims. He founded military centres such as Basra, Kufah, Fustat, which later developed into great cities of Islam. He created the office of *Qazi* (Judge).

Umar was a political genius. He succeeded in uniting all the disparate elements during his rule. A new Muslim state emerged under his able leadership.

In spite of being the powerful ruler of an empire he lived an extremely simple life. Because of his high moral character he inspired respect and admiration from all alike. He was at the height of his powers when he was stabbed by Abu Lulu on November 3, 644, a Persian Christian.

Umar was thus not only a great ruler but also an embodiment of all the virtues of Islam.

Usman ibn Affan—The Third Caliph (644-656)

Usman was born six years after the Prophet and he belonged to the Umayyad tribe of the Quraysh. He was a cloth merchant and was so rich that he was known as *Al-Ghani* (the rich). He was Abu Bakr's friend and it was Abu Bakr who had introduced Islam to him. Usman accepted Islam without questioning. He was the only member of the Umayyads to become a Muslim during the time of the persecution of Muslims. He was married to the Prophet's daughter Ruqayya. On being persecuted by the Quraysh due to his conversion, he asked Prophet's permission to migrate to Abyssinia, the land of the kind Christian king, *Najashi* (Negus). He and his wife Ruqayya were thus among the first to give up their home in the cause of God. When Muslims began to emigrate to Madinah, Usman too, along with his wife, came to Madinah and settled there.

No one conceals something in his heart, but God causes it to be seen on his face or in the slip of the tongue.
— ***Usman ibn Affan***

Ruqayya took ill in Madinah and died thereafter. Usman was very sad. So the Prophet married his second daughter to Usman. This was a great honour. Usman came to be known as "*Zun Noorain*", the possessor of two lights. He acted as the Prophet's emissary during the Hudaibiya peace treaty. Usman was also one of the scribes of the Prophet. He wrote portions of the Quran as and when they were revealed. He was also one of the ten Companions whom the Prophet had given the good news of Paradise.

Umar, on his deathbed, had nominated a six-man council to choose a Caliph from among its members. These members were Ali, Usman, Abdur Rahman ibn Auf, Saad ibn Abi Waqqas, Zubair ibn Awam, Talha ibn Obaidullah. After great deliberations, Usman was offered the Caliphate. Usman ibn Affan became the third Caliph of Islam.

Azerbaijan and Armenia were conquered during the rule of Umar. But after the dismissal of Saad ibn Abi Waqqas' governorship, Azerbaijan revolted. Usman ordered military action against it and the Province was brought again under the Caliphate.

Muawiya, Governor of Syria with the help of Abi Sarah, the Governor of Egypt, invaded Cyprus and brought it under Islamic rule. Cyprus served as a military base for the Muslims.

Usman was a simple and kind-hearted man, because of which many of his subordinates holding key positions did not fear being taken to task.

The administration of a vast empire needed a man of stern character like Umar. Although Usman was a deeply religious man, he proved to be a weak leader. His administration was not so disciplined as that of Umar, the second Caliph. Usman felt that by appointing his friends and relatives to key positions he will be able to manage administrative affairs. But this did not happen. Having no fear for being taken to task by the kind-hearted Caliph, they were all the more emboldened to rule according to their own whims and fancies, without looking after the public good. The public resented such callousness, holding the Caliph responsible for the bad administration. They even demanded his abdication, but the Caliph refused to do so. The Egyptians in particular were angry with him. They blamed the Caliph for replacing a capable governor there with his own cousin who set taxes more than they could bear to pay.

This dissension finally developed into a state of civil war. The Egyptians took more active part in this revolt. They demanded his resignation but Usman rejected all such advice and preached a public sermon against them. Soon afterwards, while he was at prayer, a group of these unruly men attacked and killed him. The period of his caliphate lasted from 644 to 656.

*The highest degree
in faith is that
you always regard
yourself in the
presence of God.
— Usman ibn Affan*

Usman's most important contribution to the cause of Islam was the preparation of the second and final version of the Quran. He ordered the Quran to be written in the Quraysh dialect of Arabic. Then he commanded that a few copies of it be made and sent to the centres of the Muslim province. Every other version was destroyed, and the Quran has remained absolutely unchanged for the centuries.

Ali ibn Abi Talib—The Fourth Caliph (656-661)

Ali ibn Abi Talib, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet of Islam, was elected the fourth Caliph. He reigned from 656 to 661.

Ali was a profoundly religious man devoted entirely to the cause of Islam. He was born in Makkah about the year 600 to Abu Talib, chief of the clan of Banu Hashim. Ali was adopted by the Prophet and lived with him in the same house. For, once Makkah suffered from economic depression. Abu Talib, Prophet's uncle had a very large family, therefore the Prophet took into his care Ali, to lighten the burden of Abu Talib.

One day, when the Prophet and Khadija were worshipping together, Ali happened to see them kneeling and prostrating themselves and reciting Quranic revelations. Ali found it very strange. He asked the Prophet: "To whom were you prostrating yourself." The Prophet answered, "We have prostrated ourselves to God." The Prophet then explained to him about God and the revelations he had received. Then the Prophet invited him to worship God alone without associating anyone with Him. Ali was excited but thought that he ought to consult his father about it. However, he could not wait any longer. The very next morning he came rushing to the Prophet and declared to them his acceptance of faith, saying: "God created me without consulting my father. Why then should I consult him in order to worship God?" Ali was the first youth to enter the fold of Islam at the age of 10. He remained a lifelong devoted follower of the Prophet.

***Never make a
decision in anger
and never make
a promise in
happiness.
— Ali ibn Abi Talib***

On the night of the migration in 622 it was Ali who risked his life by sleeping in the Prophet's bed at a time when his house was surrounded by bloodthirsty men with drawn swords with the plot of assassinating the Prophet. Ali lay there so that the Prophet may leave

unnoticed. The Prophet further asked him to stay in Makkah in order to restore all things, entrusted to the Prophet, to their rightful owners in Makkah. Only after carrying out this request of the Prophet Ali left for Madinah. In Madinah Ali married Prophet's daughter Fatima. Two sons, Hasan and Husain were born to them in Madinah.

Ali was extremely brave. He used to display great feats of courage and bravery during the military campaigns. He was also one of the Prophet's scribes. He was chosen by the Prophet for several important missions.

Ali was invited by the Muslims of Madinah to assume the office of the Caliphate after the murder of Usman, the third Caliph. For three days after Usman's murder Madinah remained completely in the grip of rioters. In such a state of affairs when Ali's name was proposed he refused at first. But the people of Madinah prevailed upon him to give second thought and come forward to serve the people. Ali therefore agreed reluctantly after hesitating for a long time.

His brief reign was beset by difficulties. The forces of lawlessness had been unleashed. Ali wanted first to concentrate on consolidating his administration and after that to take action against Usman's

murderers. He wanted to wait until the conditions were normalized. But the supporters of Usman did not listen to what Ali had to say. They thought that Ali was trying to evade the issue.

The murder of Usman had far reaching effects on Islamic history. The united and determined Muslim community was divided forever. Instead of going out to the frontiers they were involved in internecine clashes.

Instead of concentrating on consolidation Ali had to spend all his time in pacifying the warring factions. He did his best to restore peace but he failed to do so without receiving the support of the people.

Ali wanted to establish his rule on the Islamic ideals of social justice and equality. But the Quraysh aristocracy of Makkah which had amassed too much wealth in the wake of conquests opposed Ali vehemently. It was this group led by Muawiya that demanded the immediate trial of the murderers of Usman. When Ali failed to meet their demand to bring the murderer to book without delay, they revolted against Ali. Aisha, Prophet's wife, Talha, and Zubayr, prominent Companions of the Prophet, also took a leading part. This episode, known as "the battle of the camel" was suppressed, although after much bloodshed.

Ali had now established himself as Caliph by defeating his rivals. He had shifted the capital from Madinah to Kufah. The first priority in the matters of the state was given to the dismissal of the provincial governors. Muawiya ibn abi Sufiyan, governors of Syria and a relative of Usman too was dismissed. But Muawiya who had established himself securely in Syria did not accept the dismissal order. He came out openly to avenge the martyred Caliph. It was an issue on which he could mobilize a great majority of Muslims. He made eloquent speeches to play upon Muslim emotions. He took the stand that since the new Caliph is evading the issue of bringing the assassins to account, which is the demand of justice, the Caliph therefore stands disqualified for the office of the caliphate. In this way Muawiya justified his insurrection against the elected Caliph.

A hopeless man sees difficulties in every chance, but a hopeful person sees chances in every difficulty.
— Ali ibn Abi Talib

Muawiya gathered a large army of Syrians while the army of Ali comprised 50,000 Iraqis. The encounter took place on July 28, 657. Malik al-Ashtar was commanding Ali's forces. Ali was on the point of victory. But the shrewd Muawiya and his supporter Amr ibn al-As managed to avert defeat by proposing arbitration. Ali saw through this trick. But

his army forced him to accept the principle of arbitration. This greatly weakened his position.

Then, another group emerged known as *Kharijites* (Dissenters). Earlier supporters of Ali, now they turned against him. They maintained that Ali should not have accepted arbitration. They became so deadly against the Caliph that anyone who said that he was the follower of the Caliph was mercilessly killed.

Ali inflicted the *Kharijites* a decisive defeat at Nahrawan. Thousands of them were killed in the battlefield. But this defeat did not end the *Kharijite* opposition for they were spread out in different parts of the country. The extremist among them preached lawlessness, saying: "All authority belongs to God, so there should be no government".

Ali was engaged in extirpating the *Kharijites* and Muawiya found enough time to increase his influence among the people. Displaying great diplomacy Muawiya managed to cut the ground from under Ali's feet steadily, by adopting an aggressive policy against the Caliph. Ultimately by the end of 600, Ali had lost control of Egypt and Hijaz. His popularity was diminishing day by day.

***Recitation of the
Quran without
contemplation and
thought is futile.
— Ali ibn Abi Talib***

The forces of Ali and Muawiya met at Siffin. When Muawiya realized that he was going to lose the battle he managed to force the end of the fighting by having pages of the Quran fixed to the lances of his troops. Ali was obliged to accept arbitration. When Ali agreed

to this, some of his supporters abandoned him. They were not willing to accept the compromise. During the months of discussions between the arbiters, Ali's alliance grew weaker. The *Kharijites* who had revolted ultimately decided to assassinate Ali.

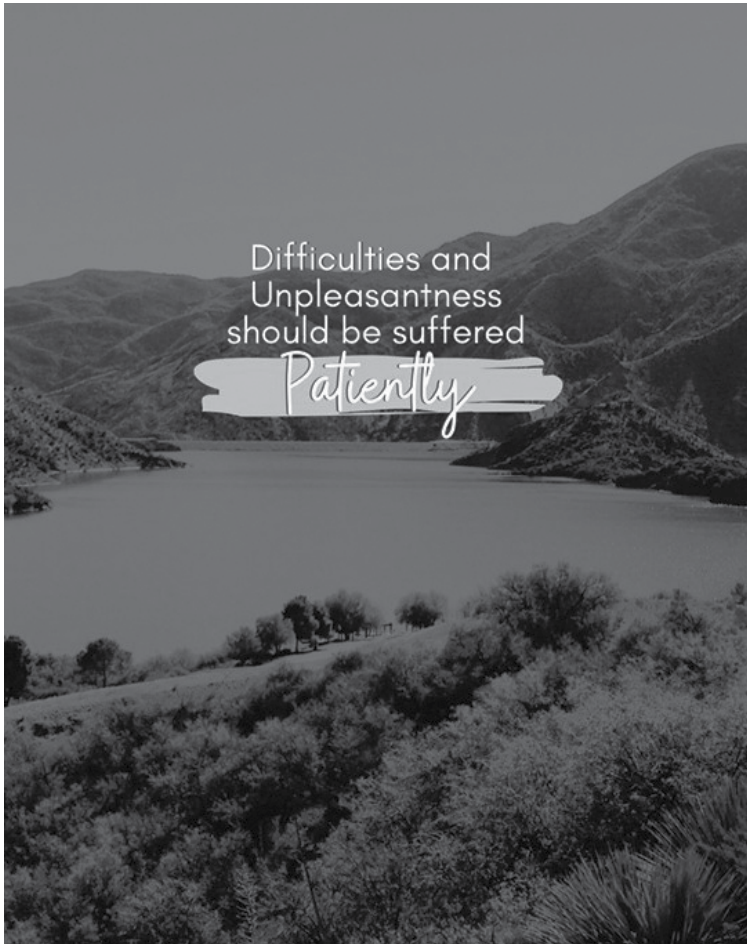
Early one morning while he was praying in a mosque at Kufah in Iraq, a *Kharijite* struck him with a poisoned sword to avenge the men slain at Nahrawan. Two days later, Ali died and was buried near Kufah. The most glorious chapter in the history of Islam came to an end by the death of Ali.

The spot near Kufah known as *Mashhad Ali* developed into one of the great centres of pilgrimage. Ali's caliphate lasted for four years and nine months. Ali's political discourses, sermons, letters, and sayings collected in a book entitled *Nahj al-Balagha* (The Road of Eloquence) are well-known in Arabic literature.

According to the famous historian, Philip K Hitti, "Ali dead proved more effective than Ali living. As a canonized martyr, he retrieved at once more than he had lost in a life-time. Though lacking in those traits that constitute a leader and a politician, viz-alertness, foresight, resolution, expediency, he still possessed the qualities of an ideal Arabian. Valiant in battle, wise in counsel, eloquent in speech, true to his friends, magnanimous to his foes, he became both the paragon of Muslim nobility and chivalry." □

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EVERY ACTION HAS A CONSEQUENCE

Result-oriented Action

A MAN came before the Prophet Muhammad and asked him for some advice. "Will you heed the advice?" the Prophet asked him. The man said that he would. The Prophet said to him: "When you decide on some action, think of its consequences. If they are good, go ahead with it: and if they are bad, refrain from it."

The Prophet's words show that every prospective action should be weighed up according to the outcome it is likely to have. One should think before one acts: what will be the consequences of my action? If the prospects appear good, one may carry on with what one is intending to do, otherwise one should rethink one's course of action. This is the realistic method of going about things, and it was this method the Prophet taught his followers to adopt.

When you decide on some action, think of its consequences. If they are good, go ahead with it: and if they are bad, refrain from it.

Generally people just take matters at their face value and rush into them without thinking. This is not the proper way of doing things. A person should study matters carefully from every angle before deciding on a course of action. He should particularly, take note of others' probable reaction. Are people likely to

stand in his way? If so, does he have the capability to overcome the obstacles they pose? Is he in a position to surmount all the hurdles which are likely to be strewn in his path, winning through to his final goal? He should consider what the social and political repercussions of his actions will be. Only if he is confident that his work will have beneficial consequences should he embark on it.

The only initiative worth taking is one, which will yield positive results. If one embarks on a destructive course of action, it will be oneself that suffers: therefore, one should steer clear of such actions, as any sensible person steers clear of destroying his own life. □



THE PURPOSE OF RELIGION

God-oriented Personality

THERE are two aspects to our world. One pertains to the visible world and the other to the invisible world. The visible world can be likened to the tip of an iceberg. Only the tip or a very tiny part of the iceberg is observable while the major part of it remains hidden from the eyes, submerged within the water. It is only religion that enables us to be able to cross the surface of the sea, deeper into the ocean beds and see the major part of this iceberg.

Repeatedly we come across such occasions in life, when a person feels he is helpless. He feels the very ends of life have slipped away from his hands. At this point in time, it is only religion that appears as a saviour. It saves his sinking ship. At that juncture, religion becomes a source of courage and conviction. A religious man, by nature, is a predictable human being. One can reliably predict his behaviour.

Religion is the source of all positive ethics. Religion gives man the power to forgive the offender. Religion raises him above greed. The feeling of envy is uprooted. He treats people with tolerance. He honours people without discrimination. He saves himself from committing injustice, always sticking to the path of justice. He treats even his enemies with justice and fairness. He contributes positively to society, becoming a giver rather than just a taker.

Religion makes one a man of principle, he becomes a person of principled character. He develops self-control and self-discipline. A religious person is a serious-minded and honest person. He is ever ready to appraise himself. A self-corrective mechanism grows within him, and this quality keeps rejuvenating his personality.

How does religion produce these superior and refined qualities in man? The reason for this is the bounds of religion are connected with God, who is the source of all goodness. God thus becomes a source of inspiration for everyone.

Religion makes man God-oriented. It produces God-oriented thinking. His life is a God-oriented life. This is the thing which makes a religious person unconquerable. A religious person develops communion with God and such a person becomes strong and powerful.

If religion does not make a man as described above, one should know that the follower is just claiming to be religious and is not truly religious. □

ORIENTALISM

True Picture

THERE are two phases of Orientalism. Modern Orientalism began after the Crusades that continued from the 11th to the 14th centuries. In the Crusades, the European nations were defeated. After this defeat they were not in a position to retaliate against their 'Muslim enemies'. They started a campaign that was based on negative propaganda against Islam; they adopted Islamic disciplines like history and the commentary of the Quran, not as a scholarly research but only to deface Islam by distorting the facts.

It will be of relevance to understand what Orientalism is, to look at it from the right perspective. Orientalism has been described in Wikipedia as an 'exaggeration of difference, the presumption of western superiority and the application of clichéd analytical models for perceiving the oriental world' (the Orient is a historical term for the East, traditionally comprising anything that belongs to the Eastern world, in relation to

Orientalism is the source of the inaccurate cultural representations that form the foundations of western thought and perception of the eastern world, specifically in relation to the Middle East region.

Europe). As such, Orientalism is the source of the inaccurate cultural representations that form the foundations of western thought and perception of the eastern world, specifically in relation to the Middle East region. The principle characteristic of Orientalism is a "subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arab-Islamic peoples and their culture".

The first Orientalist who broke this tradition was Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), a British scholar. He published a book with the title: *Heroes and Hero Worship*. This was the first attempt of giving an objective picture of Islam. He tried to dispel those misgivings about

Islam. This was the first book in this series and it marked a departure of Orientalism from negative Orientalism to positive Orientalism.

Then there were a host of Orientalists who changed this trend and published such books that were based mostly on real historical data like E. E. Kellett, David Samuel Margoliouth, Philip K. Hitti, Michael Hart, etc. Now Orientalism is not just a negative discipline as it was in previous centuries, but the scholars who adopt this field today are

generally free of a negative psychology. They try to give a true picture of Islamic history.

A great factor that helped to promote this trend was the development of science. Science has given a new method of study that is completely objective. This method has overcome the previous trend and thus now it is considered unacceptable to give a subjective colour to history. Present minds reject this kind of subjectivity. Present minds, obsessed with scientific ideas, can only accept an objective study of history.

There are a few other factors which have contributed to this objectivity. For instance the whole world is a global village, a phenomenon which has promoted a new kind of universal culture. The present world is interdependent, so no one can afford to adopt a method that is based on bias and prejudices. These factors have also greatly helped to end the previous kind of Orientalism. □

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AFTER BEING BROKEN

Awaken the Force Within

THE ATOM is the final unit of matter, just as the individual is the final unit of society. If one succeeds in breaking an atom, one does not destroy it; rather one converts it into a greater force, known as atomic energy. Matter is energy in a solid form and energy is matter in a dispersed form. When the atoms of matter are broken and converted into atomic energy, they are transformed into a force much more potent than in their material form.

A locomotive consumes two tons of coal in seventy miles; a motorcar uses up a gallon of petrol every twenty to forty miles. But when uranium weighing just twelve pounds is converted into atomic energy, it is able to convey a high-speed rocket on a 40,000-mile journey into space. That's how great the difference is between ordinary material energy and atomic energy.

Just as breakage does not destroy matter, likewise defeat does not ruin man.

So is the case with that unit of society known as man. When man is 'broken,' his horizons expand vastly. Just as breakage does not destroy matter, likewise defeat does not ruin man. Matter increases in strength when broken up. Man, when defeated, gains new, increased strength.

When man is beset by defeat, his inner forces are released. His senses are aroused. His concealed strength comes to the fore and he sets about redressing his setback. Spurred on with new resolve and determination, he devotes himself to the task of regaining what has been lost. An irresistible spirit arises within him. Nothing can arrest his advance. Like a river flowing to the sea, he surmounts every obstacle in relentless pursuit of his goal.

The occurrence of an atomic explosion in matter turns it into a vastly more powerful substance. The human personality, too, contains huge, latent potential. This potential bursts out into the open when there is an eruption within one's soul. It breaks free when some shattering disaster afflicts one. The strings that have held one down are torn apart and begin to vibrate to the tune of life. □



COMPLAINTS TAKE YOU AWAY FROM GOD

Eligibility for Special Assistance from God

THE PROPHET Muhammad began his mission in Makkah in 610 CE. Then, the time came when the chieftains of Makkah compelled him to leave the city. At that time, the Prophet said to his Companions:

“I was ordered to migrate to a town which will swallow other towns. It is called Yathrib and that is Madinah.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*)

What is said in this *Hadith* is not about the superiority of the Prophet or of the city of Madinah. Rather, it refers to a general law of God. And that is, when a person faces one-sided oppression or when something of his is wrongly snatched away from him, such a person becomes eligible for God’s special assistance. God gives him much more than what other people have wrongly taken away from him.

This special gift of God is given to the person who develops the eligibility for this gift. And this eligibility is that in such conditions he remains, till the final limit, a non-complaining person.

Under no circumstances should his sight turn away from God. He should pray for those who oppress him, and for himself he must always remain hopeful from God.

When a person displays this kind of positive approach, it is no ordinary matter. It leads to the creation of a new sort of character within him, a character that is imbued with a desire for the well-being of his oppressors, that remains firmly established in positivity despite negative experiences, and that leaves all of one’s affairs to God to take care of. Such a person’s heart is, under all circumstances, filled with spirituality. He does not react to his circumstances, but, rather, gives all his affairs to God to manage. It is this sort of person who is given that special gift from God that is mentioned in the above-quoted *Hadith*. □

When a person faces one-sided oppression or when something of his is wrongly snatched away from him, such a person becomes eligible for God’s special assistance.



FROM THE SPIRITUAL TREE

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



GOD'S REWARD

PEOPLE are searching among thorns for flowers. They are reducing their lives to rubble while imagining that very soon a big palace of their own is going to come up! Everyone is busy trying to beautify his life. Someone is busy in the field of trade or employment. Someone else is busy in the field of politics, trying to glorify his name. Someone is a clever wordsmith, using his skill with words to draw crowds. Everyone carries with him a beautiful dream of his future, and is busy, day and night, trying to turn this dream into a reality. But if you closely examine them, you will understand that for this dream of theirs to be realized, the only asset they possess is a stock of wrong actions.

Ignoring the rights of others, people want to build their children's future. They trouble their neighbours and at the same time think of bringing joy to people who live far away. They do not hesitate to use unjust means when it comes to their personal affairs, but in the outside world they turn into flag-bearers of justice. They will not tolerate even a word being said against them, but they think they can do whatsoever they like to others, imagining that they are God's soldiers.

God has placed in this world everything that a human being wants—in fact, even more than this. But the means to acquire every good thing in this world are good actions. God rewards those who fulfil the rights of others, who do not harm their neighbours, who deal justly with people, who lead their lives in devotion to God, rather than in devotion to themselves, who bow down before the truth, even if it is against them, who surrender their egos to God and who agree to live egoless in this world. □

God has placed in this world everything that a human being wants—in fact, even more than this. But the means to acquire every good thing in this world are good actions.



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A BETTER PRICE

Tenfold Rewards

DURING the Caliphate of Abu Bakr, there was a drought and people were in great distress. The Caliph told them not to worry, for God would soon relieve them. Before long, the trading caravan of Usman (a senior Companion) arrived with its merchandise from Syria. There were one thousand camels in it, all of them loaded with wheat and foodstuff. When the news got around Madinah, all the great traders of the city flocked to Usman's house. They knocked on the door and he came out to meet them. He had a sheet on his shoulder, one end of which was hanging down in front of him, and the other behind him.

"Why have you come, and what do you want of me?" he said to the assembled traders.

"We have heard that a caravan of yours has arrived from Syria, in which there are one thousand camels loaded with wheat and foodstuff. We want to buy the goods. Sell it to us, so that we can pass it on to those who need it in Madinah," they replied.

Usman ushered them inside. "How much profit will you give me on my merchandise?" he asked them.

"Twelve dirhams on every ten dirhams worth" they answered. "But I can get a better price," Usman told them. "Then we'll give you fourteen," Usman gave them the same answer. They put their price up to fifteen dirhams, but still Usman said that he could get a better price.

"But who can give a better price," they protested, "when all the merchants of Madinah are gathered here?"

"I can get ten dirhams for every one dirhams worth," he told them. "Can any of you give me a better price than that?"

There was no one that could. Then Usman recited the verse of Quran which says that those who do good will be rewarded tenfold (6: 160). Then he told them that he was giving all the goods to the needy people of Madinah.

If one has faith in God's promises, one's courage is lifted to a degree where any self-sacrifice appears easy.

The Prophet said: "Save yourselves from the fire of Hell, even if it is only with a morsel of a date; and if one does not have one, then with a good word." □

THE CONSTRUCTION OF LIFE

Religion and Technology

REVIEWING modern, scientific civilization, a commentator has made the very pertinent observation that it is not invested with ideological permanence. This seems quite true when we consider that Copernicus replaced Ptolemy, Newton replaced Copernicus, and Einstein replaced Newton.

The culture of the modern age has come to be called the 'culture of technology'. But this is a contradiction in terms. Culture, by its very nature, suggests permanence. But science and technology are sadly wanting in this quality. Any culture based on technology will always have the characteristics of impermanence. It can never meet the eternal requirements of human nature.

Technology is of material service to man. As such, it cannot be the total basis of human culture. It can certainly take us from the age of the plough to the age of the tractor, or from the bullock-cart to the aeroplane. But technology cannot give man a culture or a civilization in the real sense of those words. Technology can serve man but it cannot be expected to provide man with the spiritual mainspring of his life—a religion.

Technology, in short, is the servant of man, whereas culture is his life's religion. If technology is life's conveyance, it is culture, which determines man's destination. The changes taking place in things like conveyances do no real harm. But when the very basis of culture begins to be shuffled, human life loses its meaningfulness.

The right way is to make technology life's servant, while following a God-oriented life should be the basis of culture. Choosing a God-oriented life should be a matter of one's research where one discovers one's true creator and lives according to the creation plan of his Creator. □

*If technology is
life's conveyance,
it is culture, which
determines man's
destination.*



ON A COLLISION COURSE

Avoidance, the Only Solution

ON OCTOBER 26, 1992, as an Indian Airlines Boeing 737, Flight number IC 467, approached the Goa airfield, its commander asked the ATC (Air Traffic Controller) for permission to land. He was asked by the ATC to delay landing, and to maintain his altitude at 3,000 feet to allow an Indian Navy aircraft to take off. The Indian Airlines pilot complied with these instructions and was manoeuvring at that height to initiate his approach when he spotted a Navy aircraft call sign 303, less than half a nautical mile away and very obviously on a collision course. The IA Commander promptly reduced speed and dived 300 feet to avoid a catastrophe. This split second decision saved the situation.

Those who insist on going forward, when wisdom dictates retreat, will do little except add to the chapters of destruction in history.

This incident may appear to relate solely to the world of aviation, but it has a great lesson for the everyday world. The human journey through life is also made on exactly the same principle as was followed by the quick-thinking pilot. Two aeroplanes on a collision course were both going to be destroyed in a matter of seconds. At the crucial moment, one aeroplane dived below the other and as a result of this 'retreat', both were saved from disaster.

This incident shows that just as advancing is necessary to succeed in life, so is retreating. In this world, sometimes, retreat is more desirable than forward movement. When there is fear of a head-on collision, avoidance is the only solution.

Those who insist on going forward, when wisdom dictates retreat, will do little except add to the chapters of destruction in history. Their so-called advance will culminate for their nation in final and eternal retreat. □



We must set our goals in life in terms of intellectual achievement and not in terms of material achievement.

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.



RIGHT TO LIVE WITHOUT TERROR

THE HUMAN right to live without terror is, without doubt, an urgent need of our times. From the First World War till now, a great number of charters and declarations of this nature have been issued by different international forums, including the United Nations. But, as we know, these charters and declarations have yielded no result.

Looking at this matter deeply, we find that the problem is not basically about the lack of a suitable charter. Rather, it is essentially about the lack of results from the charters that we already have. We need an ideology to counter terrorist ideology: The issuing of charter is only half the solution to the problem. The remaining part of the solution involves extensive ideological campaigning in the charter's support. Since this task has never been effectively performed, the various charters have not yielded the desired results.

Terrorism begins from the mind, not from the gun. It must be countered with an ideology, not with guns.

Let's take an example to illustrate this point. After the Second World War, the United States of America faced two major threats, one after another: one pertaining to communism, and the other to terrorism. As we know, America successfully solved the problem of communism, while it utterly failed to solve the problem of terrorism, even after spending trillions of

dollars ostensibly for this purpose. This difference in the results in the two cases was due to the difference of strategy adopted for dealing with these two issues.

America launched a strong ideological campaign to counter the threat it faced from communism. This ideological campaign proved so successful that even the communist leaders themselves lost confidence in the communist philosophy. They began to prefer a liberal economy to a socialist economy, until in 1991 the communist empire collapsed at the hands of its own people.

On the other hand, in order to counter the menace of terrorism, America has depended solely on guns and bombs. It has failed to produce an ideology to counter the terrorist ideology in the same way it had done to counter the communist ideology. That is why, in spite of great loss in terms of lives and resources, it has not been possible to extirpate the menace of terrorism. In such a situation, only a charter that utilizes experiences of countering the communist ideology can successfully serve this purpose.

Terrorism can be brought to an end solely through intellectual awareness, based on religion and spirituality.

An appropriate charter in this regard can only be one that is based on realism. A draft based simply on sentiments is bound to fail. We have to convince the world that we need to cherish the concept of reconciliation between civilizations, as opposed to the concept of a clash of civilizations. To adopt a practical strategy, one has to be realistic and should not let emotions overrule one's judgement.

Terrorism begins from the mind, not from the gun. Terrorists have an ideal in their minds, and they resort to violence to achieve this ideal. They remain unaware of the fact that idealism is not achievable in this world. The only possible option for them is to accept the less than ideal situation. But because they refuse to accept this, they continue to engage in futile violence. They are also unaware of the fact that in the present world no positive result can be achieved through violence. The truth is that terrorism is the result of intellectual unawareness. This is what makes terrorists resort to violence. They are fired by the mistaken belief that in this way they can realize their false hopes. Terrorism can be brought to an end solely through intellectual awareness, based on religion and spirituality. The ideology of peace based on secularism has already been tried and it has failed. We must cherish the concept of reconciliation between civilizations, as opposed to the concept of a clash of civilizations.

It is from religion that we should draw our ideology of peace. Jesus Christ says in this regard: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Luke 20: 25). This is not simply a Christian formula of peace. Rather, it is a common formula, recognized by almost all the religions, in one form or another. The Prophet of Islam has expressed the same principle in these words: "Render what is due to the rulers and ask for your dues from God" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*). Similar is the case with other religions. Hinduism preaches *nishkam karma* or selfless service. Jewish scriptures say: "Blame thyself." According to Jainism and Buddhism, *Ahimsa* or non-violence is the greatest virtue.

The essence of all these teachings is the non-confrontational or non-political approach. Non-political activism is only another name for non-violent activism. Political activism generates hate and violence, while non-political activism brings about peace and brotherhood. Terrorism begins from the mind, not from the gun. It must be countered with an ideology, not with guns. Religious ideology is based on the relationship between man and God. On the other hand, the ideology behind present terrorist movements is based on what can be called a 'man-versus-man' concept. It is this 'man-versus-man' activism that results in violence and terror. Contrary to this, activism based on the relationship between Man and God produces love and peace in society. This is not a passive attitude. Rather, it is activism in the complete sense of the word. It leads us to avoid political conflict and to avail of the opportunities present in fields other than politics. It is a way of buying time. To put it briefly, it may be called 'positive status-quoism', that is, accepting the political status quo, and, at the same time, availing of opportunities in non-political fields. It is from religion that we

Political activism generates hate and violence, while non-political activism brings about peace and brotherhood.

should draw our Ideology of Peace: This religious formula provides the method by which we can achieve our goal through peaceful means. If we are to succeed in ensuring the "Human Right to live without Terror", there are a few other matters that must be addressed. Here are some issues that must be considered in any draft charter for the "Human Right to Live without Terror":

1. 'Super-powers' will have to abandon the notion that they can play the role of global policemen. This notion is a complete anachronism. Such imperial thinking may have had some validity in the ancient age of

kingship. But now it has lost all relevance. It can produce only negative results. Today the formula of political adjustment or co-existence alone is practicable. The concept of 'political master' ruling over 'political subjects' has no relevance in the modern age.

2. Wherever there is terrorism, it is, directly or indirectly related to the question of ownership of, and control over, territory. Experience shows that in this matter it is the policy of give-and-take alone which is practicable. The concept of unilateral occupation is no longer workable. All nations must adopt the policy of give-and-take as soon as possible. This is the only practical solution to the problem of terrorism.

3. Time is now running out for the terrorist groups. They must learn a lesson from their experience and realize that in the post-industrial age, they are left with no option at all but peaceful activism. Violent activism is not going to yield any positive results whatsoever. The terrorist groups, therefore, should finally come to the conclusion that

It is essential that efforts towards the promotion of peace should be separated from political interests.

their action can only aggravate the problem. It cannot solve it. Therefore, they must switch over from violence to peace without any delay. They must at all times choose the peaceful method over violent methods.

4. Governments as well as non-government actors must accept that if a dispute cannot be solved through mutual dialogue, the other option available to them is not confrontation but, rather, referral of the dispute to some forum for arbitration. Fortunately, this forum already exists in the form of the International Court of Justice. In the present circumstances, no other option is available either to governments or non-government actors. Whenever a controversy cannot be brought to an end by mutual negotiations, it should be referred to the International Court of Justice, and its verdict should be accepted unconditionally by both the parties.

5. Modern 'developed' nations spend trillions of dollars to produce weapons of mass destruction. Almost none of them could, however, make use of the deadly weapons at their disposal. America dropped the atomic bomb only once. Later, despite involving itself in several wars, it could not make any use of the nuclear bomb. The truth is that nuclear weapons can be used only once. Once such destructive weapons have been used, such deterrent factors emerge against their use that it becomes impossible to employ them again. These weapons

have now become a liability: they are no longer an asset for nations that once used to be proud of possessing them. These nations are now left with no option but to abandon them forever. Given this state of affairs, what nations must do is to unilaterally abandon their weapons of mass destruction programmes. The truth is that in this matter there exists practically no other option.

6. Along with adopting the above strategy, launching an effective and persistent ideological campaign in its support is also indispensable, making use of all modern means of communication.

7. Today, there are a number of national and international forums striving for peace. However, we would not be wrong in saying that their efforts have been marred to a great extent because of their having been politicized. That is why they have produced little or no results. For instance, most of the peace prizes are given on a political basis. It is essential that efforts towards the promotion of peace should be separated from political interests, otherwise no such end can be accomplished. □



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THE THRILL OF DISCOVERY

Awe-inspiring Cosmos

THE SUN is 1,300,000 times the size of our earth, and 92,900,000 miles distant from it. Despite this enormous distance, light and heat from the sun reach us in considerable quantity. By cosmic standards, the sun is a relatively small star; it only appears large to us because of its proximity. Most stars are both larger and more radiant than the sun. Vast globes of heat and light, they are scattered in huge quantities throughout the universe. They have been shining for billions upon billions of years, but their reserves of thermal energy show no signs of being exhausted.

How do stars produce such vast quantities of energy? The astrophysicist Hans Bethe spent years exploring this question. Finally, he discovered that the secret lies in the carbon cycle. His research in this field won him the Nobel Prize for physics in 1967.

The day that Hans Bethe made his great scientific discovery was one of great joy for him. His wife, Rose, says that she was with her husband in the New Mexico desert when it happened. It was night, and the stars shone with immense lustre down on the vast, open desert below. She looked up with astonishment at the sky. "Gosh," she exclaimed, "how brightly the stars are shining!" Her husband replied: "Do you realize, just now you are standing next to the only human being who knows why they shine at all?"

Hans Bethe's discovery only answered a minute and partial side of the real question; it did not reach the true crux of the matter. His discovery of the carbon cycle leaves another greater question unanswered: how does this carbon cycle come to operate in stars? A true believer discovers the answer to this question in the form of God, the Maker and Sustainer of the universe. It is He who has invested the stars with this magic property.

How ironical it is that a small discovery should make a scientist lose himself in a spontaneous outburst of feeling, while the far greater discovery that a believer makes—that of God—should create in him no such feeling. Those who really believe in God feel the thrill of their discovery. So uncontrollable is their joy that they cannot help expressing it to others. If there are no traces of the joy of discovery, the discovery itself has yet to be made. □

GOD HAS A PLAN OF CREATION

Abide in Paradise

GOD, according to His will, created a perfect world called Paradise. A world in accordance with all of our desires as human beings, in that it is free of all limitations and disadvantages, free of fear and pain; free of all imperfections. An eternal world where there is no death or old age. An ideal world where we could achieve complete fulfilment.

A perfect Paradise cannot be inhabited by less-than-perfect beings. So, God created perfection-seeking beings—us. He intended us to spend a period of trial on this present and imperfect world and after this, according to our deeds, we will earn the right to inhabit the perfect and eternal world.

As part of this test, Paradise is hidden from us. This world, therefore, has all the components necessary for a test. It has perfection-seeking beings in a less-than-perfect world. Beings who have been given complete freedom to choose their actions. We thus have a choice—we can misuse our freedom to do evil, or we can use our freedom wisely, submit to God and qualify for Paradise.

The test of man rests on the discovery of God, who is unseen. Before we can see Him, we should voluntarily surrender ourselves to Him.

Who will qualify for Paradise? Those pure souls who, in their life in this world, come up to the standard of citizenship of Paradise—a perfect world of eternal comfort and pleasure, a world which holds far greater meaning than this one.

The test rests on our discovery of God, who is unseen. Before we can see Him, we should voluntarily surrender ourselves to Him.

Our desire for Paradise should make us willingly adopt divine ethics. We should develop intellectually and spiritually until we are fit to inhabit the refined world of Paradise. Only those of us who succeed in maintaining a high moral character will find a place in this divine world of peace, love, and understanding. □



REALITY IS APPARENT WHEN BIAS IS SHED

Order and Design in the Universe

"Who was the God who wrote these signs?" This was the question asked by the great Austrian physicist, Ludwig Boltzmann (1844-1906) when he looked at the inspired equations which the celebrated Scottish physicist, James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879), had written to express the laws of electromagnetic interaction.

Physical studies of the universe do, in fact, indicate that behind all of its functioning there is something which is highly meaningful, but at the same time impenetrably mysterious.

We strive ever onwards towards an analysis of cosmic events, for their manifestations evince careful organization rather than randomness and fortuitousness thus encouraging us to believe that they are created and controlled by some unimaginably superior mind.

***One who observes
the universe without
prejudice is sure to
find God.***

Albert Einstein (1879-1955) supported this view when he said that he was more of a philosopher than a physicist, "for I believe there is a reality outside of us." In this sense he belonged "to the ranks of devoutly religious men."

With the support of eminent physicists of the previous two centuries as well as the scientific luminaries of the present day, more and more credence is being given by secular schools of thought to the view that the universe is a sign from God. One who observes it without prejudice is sure to find God.

But those who allow false beliefs to distort their vision will continue to grope not only in the dark but even in broad daylight. They will not find God even if they stand face to face with Him.

If the foremost physicists of our time can keep their minds open to the possibility of there being a supreme being, a Creator and Sustainer, others also should think about rising above their bias on the path to seeking the truth. □



LOSING ALL FOR THE SAKE OF GOD

God's Promise Fulfilled

THE Prophet Abraham was born in the Iraqi town of Ur. When his opponents made life impossible for him there, God commanded him to proceed to the Arab desert. There, in the uninhabited valley of Makkah, he built the House of God. One of the prayers that he uttered on this occasion was this:

Lord, I have settled some of my offspring in a barren valley near Your Sacred House, so that they may observe the prayer. Put in the hearts of men kindness towards them, and provide them with the earth's fruits, so that they may give thanks. Lord, You have knowledge of all that we hide and all that we reveal: nothing in heaven or earth is hidden from God. (QURAN 14: 38)

There is a great symbolic importance attached to this event in the life of Abraham. Here history speaks, telling us what happens to God's servant who arises to preach the message of truth in all its purity: he is rejected by the conventional order; religious institutions refuse to acknowledge him; he even becomes unappealing to friends and relatives. The cultivated valleys of the world, despite all their fertility, become dry for him. He is forced to take his wife and family to live in a barren land. There, he calls upon his Lord: "Lord," he says, "they have no one to help them but You. The world of man has refused to support them; now You make springs gush forth beneath their feet."

To preach the pure truth is the most difficult task beneath the heavens; but it is this task that draws God's succour more than any other.

This is an extremely delicate moment in the history of man. The pulse of the universe stops beating at such a time. The earth and all heavenly bodies await new instructions before continuing their course. Man sees a new and unfamiliar happening. "Springs" gush forth in the desert. The blessings of God start descending from above. Winds scatter the words of the preacher among humankind. God, in all His might, comes to the assistance of His servants—the ones who were scorned and deprived of all assistance by people of the world. To preach the pure truth is the most difficult task beneath the heavens; but it is this task that draws God's succour more than any other. This succour only comes, however, when the preacher of God's word has fully communicated his message, and people's persecution of him as a result has reached its climax. □

THE EMERGENCE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

A Historical Perspective

POISED between Africa, Asia, and Europe, the Arabian Peninsula lay at the very heart of the ancient world. Yet no ambitious conqueror had invaded the territory; no ruler had sought to bring it under his domain. All military campaigns had been limited to the area bordering Arabia—Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon. As for the Arabian Peninsula, no one had considered it worth fighting for. True, its shores were lapped by three seas, but there was nothing on its land but inhospitable desert and barren mountains.

Makkah was the central township of this land. It was in this “uncultivable valley” that the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, may peace be upon him, was born. His father, Abdullah ibn Abdul Muttalib, died a few months before the birth of the Prophet. He was only six years of age when his mother, Amina, also passed away. For two years, he was cared for by his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, and, when he too died, the Prophet’s uncle, Abu Talib, became his guardian. Abu Talib’s demise occurred three years before the emigration to Medina. The Prophet, at the most difficult stage of his life, was left without a guardian.

In a short period of twenty-three years, the Islamic revolution under the Prophet’s guidance not only assured itself a permanent place in human history; it also created a new history of its own.

Nature had endowed the Prophet with a grand personality. Those who saw him in his youth used to remark, “This boy has a great future.” His dignified and impressive personality grew with age. “Those who saw him for the first time were filled with awe, and those who came close to him grew to love him,” Ali, his cousin, once commented. The Prophet’s noble

character was undisputed, yet when in his fortieth year, he announced his prophetic mission, people’s attitude towards him altered. They poured scorn on his claim to prophethood. “Look at this village boy who reckons he’s in contact with the heavens,” they would say.

His preaching mission extended over a mere twenty-three years. It was during this short time that he brought about a revolution among the Arab tribes, the like of which the world had never seen. Within one hundred years this revolution had vanquished both the Sassanian

and the Byzantine Empires. With the fall of those two great empires of the world, Islam annexed the territory extending from Iran and Iraq to Bukhara in the east, while in the west, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and then the whole of North Africa, were conquered by Islam. And the torrent did not halt there. In AD 711, Islam surged forward across the Straits of Gibraltar into the Iberian Peninsula. In 732 a Frankish prince, Charles Martel, arrested the advance of Islam at Tours. Then followed the Crusades, stretching over two centuries, and after the Crusades the horrific onslaughts of the Tartar tribes. But despite these attacks from outside, the Islamic Empire held its own until the 15th century, when, due to infighting among the Muslims themselves, Spain was lost.

It was then the turn of the Turks and the Mughals to be aroused by the spirit of Islam. In 1453, the Turks conquered Constantinople and advanced into Eastern Europe as far as Yugoslavia. A Turkish army remained encamped outside Vienna until 1683. In the 16th century the Mughals established Islamic rule in India and Afghanistan. Over the last thirteen centuries Muslims have spread to every corner of the globe. Close on four dozen countries of Asia and Africa have come to constitute a Muslim world. According to a 2015 study reported by Wikipedia there are 1.8 billion Muslims in the world today.

This was all the result of a twenty-three-year effort conducted in Arabia under the Prophet's guidance. In this short space of time, the Islamic revolution not only assured itself of a permanent place in human history; it also created a new history of its own. Man does not have it in him to accomplish such a gigantic task; it can only be accomplished by God. The Islamic revolution was truly the work of God.

It seems as if God had made special arrangements for all this beforehand. From the bare Arabian desert, He raised up a people of extraordinary tenacity, a people whose characters had been tempered by their environment. They knew only acceptance or denial; for them there was no third alternative. In them were preserved all the natural qualities needed for dedication to a cause. Added to this was the fact that the two great powers of the day lay on the borders of their country. It was only natural that the mighty empires of Rome and Persia should

The Islamic revolution opened out hitherto unexplored opportunities for man. It made God's revealed religion a historical reality, something that it had not been before.

not take kindly to the emergence of a new power at their doorstep. In their attempt to arrest the rise of Islam, they waged war against the Muslims. In so doing, they forced the Muslims to fight back. This gave the Muslims the chance to conquer the empires of Rome and Persia, whose borders, at that time, extended to the farthest reaches of the known world. There is no doubting the fact that the conquests of Islam were not wars of aggression against others; rather they were a response to aggression from others. They were wars of self-defence and never, in any country of the world, has there been two minds on the justification of such war.

Over and above the political significance of these events was the fact that the Islamic revolution opened out hitherto unexplored opportunities for man. It made God's revealed religion a historical reality, something that it had not been before.

The revolution of the Prophet had great political and strategic implications. But its main importance lies in the spread of God's glory, and revelation of divine justice.

It ushered in the age of the press, ensuring the preservation of the Quran for all time. It brought the age of democracy and freedom of speech to the world, removing all artificial barriers that had obstructed preachers in their call to truth. It made new discoveries possible in the world of science, enabling religious truths to be proved and explained on a rational, intellectual level.

An even more important aspect of this revolution was that, through the Prophet, God showed the world what would happen in the Hereafter. His life and mission provided man with a preview of the events of the next world. Those who followed the truth the Prophet brought were made supreme, and that is how they will remain forever in the Hereafter. The wicked, meanwhile, were made to taste the humiliation that they would forever be a prey to in the world to come.

History shows that those who devote their lives to God always appear in a passive and depressed condition, while those devoted to wealth and power always seem to have their way in the world. Such is the sombre evidence of the history of saints and prophets. This state of affairs is quite contrary to reality, for, eventually, God will bestow everlasting honour and glory upon His true servants, while self-worshippers and worshippers of the world will forever be assigned to a pit of humiliation and disgrace.

This world is for the trial of man. Here, people have the chance to act as they please. That is why God does not hold anyone in check in this world. But once, at least, by means of the Prophet of Islam, God has shown on earth the situation that will prevail in full and permanent form in the next world.

The Companions of the Prophet, whose homes were demolished, for whom the earth had become a place of unmitigated oppression, who were robbed of their properties, who were so victimized and terrorized that they lived in constant fear of extermination—these very people were raised to a position of great honour. The Quraish, the Romans and the Iranians, the Yemenis and the Ghassanis—those who took pride in their wealth and power—were meanwhile reduced to ignominy and disgrace.

Every prophet who comes from God provides a criterion of divine justice. Through him God announces to man the decisions that He Himself will announce in the next world. But the Prophet of Islam gave such a display of divine justice that it became incorporated in human history. What the world experienced from him became a historical reality, like many other human experiences. Man has seen with his own eyes how God honours His faithful servants and degrades those who rebel against Him. Heaven and Hell are realities that will be made manifest in the next world. But man has been given a preliminary glimpse of them in this world so that he may take heed.

The revolution brought about by the Prophet Muhammad showed man in advance the realities that will come upon him in stark and absolute form in the Hereafter.

What really emerged with the prophethood of Muhammad was the divinity of God. That is why the New Testament foretells of his prophethood as the “Kingdom of God”. There is no doubting the fact that the revolution of the Prophet had great political and strategic implications. But its main importance lies in the spread of God’s glory, and revelation of divine justice. The revolution brought about by the Prophet Muhammad showed man in advance the realities that will come upon him in stark and absolute form in the Hereafter. □



THE TEST OF MAN

Self-discipline Rather than Freedom

IN 1945, a single atom bomb named "Little Boy" destroyed the entire city of Hiroshima. This was the first nuclear weapon used in warfare exploding with an energy equivalent to 15,000 tons of TNT causing widespread death and destruction. By today's standards, this was a "little" bomb as most of the nuclear weapons tested since then had a yield of over 100,000 tons of TNT with the most powerful weapon tested having a yield of 50 megatons of TNT, each megaton being equal to a million tons of TNT. Now, nearly seventy five years later, the world's nuclear arsenal contains 14,575 nuclear bombs with a combined power of unimaginable destruction. As Jonathan Schell has pointed out in his best-seller *The Fate of the Earth*, man is now in a position to destroy life on earth many times over.

Modern man takes enormous pride in the freedom he has won for himself. But it is self-discipline rather than freedom that is needed for peace to prevail on earth.

What, basically, are these weapons? Like any other weapon, they are just a misuse of the resources of nature. A sword is a misuse of steel, a nuclear bomb a misuse of nuclear energy.

The things from which weapons are made were in the possession of nature for millions of years, with no havoc or destruction being caused by them. When man gained control of them, however, they suddenly became destructive. Why? The reason is that nature has no freedom. Man, on the other hand, is

free to act as he pleases. The fact is what philosophers call a 'problem of evil' is simply a misuse of human freedom.

Modern man takes enormous pride in the freedom he has won for himself. But it is self-discipline rather than freedom that is needed for peace to prevail on earth. The freedom of choice that man has been given in the world today is a test; it is not his right. If he uses his freedom correctly, and makes the right choice for himself, he will be successful. But if he misuses his freedom, he is doomed to failure.

Resources that remain in the control of nature function properly. When man gains control of them, however, they cause havoc in the world. This fact shows us how order can be maintained in the world: man must learn how to utilize these resources in the way that nature utilizes them. The model of nature must be applied to human life. This is the real task facing both individuals and societies in the world today. □

DEATH: GRAVEST EVENT

A Point of No Return

THE MOMENT of death is harsher than any moment we can imagine. Hardships which cause us distress in this life are nothing compared to the hardship which will one day confront us in the form of death.

Death is a journey towards the most difficult stage of life. It signifies one's entrance—in a state of total powerlessness, destitution and helplessness—to the next world. There is a limit to every hardship we bear on earth; but death will make us enter a world of unlimited hardships and difficulties.

In reality, this is the state we are in on earth. Inherently, we are so weak that we cannot endure even minor discomfort. Even the prick of a needle, a day without food and drink, or a few sleepless nights, are enough to make our whole body tremble. But we are provided with what we need in this world. That is why we have forgotten how helpless we are, and remain ignorant of our real situation.

In this world, there is water and sustenance for man; there is air and light in abundance; the forces of nature can be subdued, bringing opportunities for human civilization. If this world were to be taken away from us, nowhere in space could we make another world like it. There would be nothing for us to do but wander around in darkness.

Man bewails the calamities that strike him on earth. But if he were to realize the intensity of the coming day, he would see that all this is nothing compared to what will come to pass. Comfort and self-respect in this world make man complacent and proud. But if he were to know what was lying in store for him, he would be humble before the Lord. "Lord," he would cry out, "worldly honour and comfort are of no consequence if they do not last through to the next, more abiding stage of life."

Death is not the end of our lives; it is the beginning of a new stage in life. For some that stage will be a pit of torment to outrival all torments; for others it will be joy that exceeds any other. □

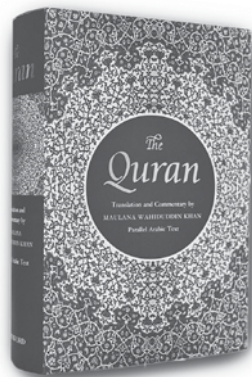
Man bewails the calamities that strike him on earth. But if he were to realize the intensity of the coming day, he would see that all this is nothing compared to what will come to pass.

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 AD 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



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

The Merciful who taught the Quran—He created man and He taught him speech. The sun and the moon move according to a fixed reckoning; the stars and the trees bend in prostration. He raised the heavens and set up the measure, so that you should not transgress the measure. Always measure with justice and do not give short measure. (55: 1-9)

God created human beings. He granted them the unique power of speech—a power not bestowed upon any other creature or anything else in the whole known universe. Then, there is the practical example of the role of justice and fair play which is inherent in the universe at God's behest. The whole world surrounding the human being is based on these principles of balance and justice, which God wants human beings to follow; and this is clearly set forth in the Quran. The Quran is the verbal expression of this Divine justice and the universe is its practical expression. It is imperative that the subjects of God weigh their words and deeds in this balance. They should not be unjust in either giving or taking.

He has laid out the earth for His creatures. On it are fruits and palm-trees with sheathed clusters [of dates], and grains with their husk and fragrant plants. Which of your Lord's wonders would you deny? He has created man, from dry ringing clay, like the potter's, and He created the jinns from a flame of fire. Which of your Lord's wonders would you deny? He is the Lord of the two easts and the Lord of the two wests. Which of your Lord's wonders would you deny? He has set the two oceans in motion, converging together. Between them is a barrier, which they do not overrun. Which of your Lord's wonders would you

deny? Pearls and corals come forth from both of them. Which, of your Lord's wonders would you deny? His are the lofty ships, that rear aloft on the sea like mountains. Which of your Lord's wonders would you deny? (55: 10-25)

A large part of this universe is filled with stars which consist entirely of fire. *Jinns* are also made of this fire. But human beings have been given special treatment by God in that they have been made of earth, or clay, which is an extremely rare thing in this extensive universe.

In the whole universe the earth is a unique exception. Here, all the factors that are conducive to the existence, survival, and cultural development of man have been provided in the most appropriate proportions and in the most balanced manner. One of these arrangements is the system of 'two easts' and 'two wests' on the earth. In winter, the places on the horizon where the sun rises and sets are different from those in summer. In this way, there is a range of 'easts' and 'wests'. This seasonal difference occurs due to the axial tilt of the earth in space. This tilt is a most unique feature, and man receives many natural advantages on account of this.

The exceptional treatment of man and the earth in this universe is such a great manifestation of God's grace and bounty that man is in no way capable of thanking his Creator sufficiently.

All that is on the earth is doomed to perish, while your Lord's own Self will remain full of majesty and glory. Which of your Lord's wonders would you deny? Everyone in the heavens and on the earth entreats Him. Every day He manifests Himself in a new state. (55: 26-29)

Nothing in this world possesses creative power i.e. the objects on which things depend for their continued existence are not self-created. This shows the boundless power of the Creator.

The signs of God in this world are so many that it is not possible for any thinking individual to ignore them. But man is such a transgressor that, even when surrounded by a host of signs, he denies them. □



ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

Which clauses of the Quran do you think are the most misinterpreted ones in today's world?

The most misinterpreted aspect of the Quran is *jihad*. *Jihad*, in reality, is peaceful activism but it has been misinterpreted as violent activism. *Jihad* is a fact of life. What is called 'effort' or 'struggle' in English is called '*jihad*' in Arabic. *Jihad* is not something mysterious nor is it synonymous with violence. It simply means making great efforts or striving for a particular purpose.

What do Muslims have to do to remove Islamophobia from people of other faiths?

I do not believe that 'Islamophobia' exists. The irony is that this term has not been coined by other communities—it has been so named by the Muslim community themselves. Thus, Islamophobia is simply an allegation and not a real phenomenon.

In Islamic terms, this is a case of 'calling others by offensive nicknames' and is forbidden by the faith. Thus, first of all, Muslims must abandon using this term for others for the Quran states:

Believers, let not some men among you ridicule others: it may be that the latter are better than the former; nor should some women laugh at others; it may be that the latter are better than the former; do not defame or be sarcastic to each other, or call each other by [offensive] nicknames. How bad it is to earn an evil reputation after accepting the faith! Those who do not repent are evil-doers. (49: 11)

The fact is contrary to what Muslims think. Why do Muslims say that the West has Islamophobia? The reason is that Muslims give a negative interpretation to an event involving Islam and the West. However, the West does not actually mean anything negative. In this case, the responsibility goes to the Muslims, and not the West. So, in reality, if there is something, it is Muslim-o-phobia. The resentment is not towards Islam but against the un-Islamic practices of Muslims. We must contemplate and become more introspective about our actions and their effect on others. If Muslims introspect and rectify their course of action, they would no longer remain a problem-community for anyone.

What should be the approach of a Muslim towards verbal attack over social and other media?

These kind of talks on social and other media are based on vested interests and political motivations. Muslims should not retaliate on any negative remarks and should instead focus on positive dissemination of ideas. They must remain peaceful, polite, and take guidance from the following verses of the Quran:

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. (41: 34)

The true servants of the Gracious One are those who walk upon the earth with humility and when they are addressed by the ignorant ones, their response is 'Peace'. (25: 63)

To what extent are Islam and secularism reconcilable?

Islam and secularism are fully compatible. As per the *encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, secularism is a policy of non-interference in religious matters. In a secular government, every religious community has the right to follow its own faith. This was demonstrated even by the Prophet Muhammad when he drafted the Madinah charter, according to which different religious groups were allowed to have their own personal law.

The true meaning of secular personal law has been alluded to in the following verse of the Quran, according to which, people of other faiths could follow their own Holy books to judge their matters:

We have revealed the Torah, in which there is guidance and light. By it the prophets who were obedient to Us judged the Jews, and so did the rabbis and the priests, according to God's Book which had been entrusted to their care; and to which they were witnesses. (5: 44)

But why do they come to you for judgement when they have the Torah, which enshrines God's own judgement? (5: 43)

The Quran and the life of the Prophet Muhammad make it clear that secularism and the teachings of Islam are alike. Groups that claim otherwise are completely mistaken in promoting un-Islamic ideas of religious superiority. □

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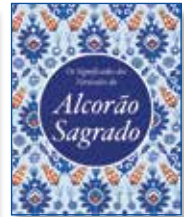
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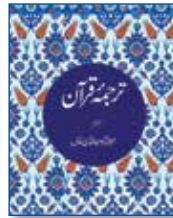
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Date of Publication 15th of every month
Spirit of Islam | Issue 79 | July 2019 | 52 Pages
Licensed To Post Without Prepayment | License No: WPP-284
Postal Regn. No: KRNA/BGE-1101/2018-2020 | RNI No: KARENG/2012/46265
Posted at Bengaluru PSO, Mysore Road, Bengaluru-560026 on 24/26th of every month



Printed, published & owned by

Fathima Sarah, 002, HM Wimberly, 6 Berlie Street Cross, Langford Town, Bengaluru - 560025
Printed at COSMOS Printers and Publishers, 450, 3rd Cross, Wilson Garden, Bengaluru - 560027