

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



Success depends on the ability to convert unfavourable circumstances into favourable ones.

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

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

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

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

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

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



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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

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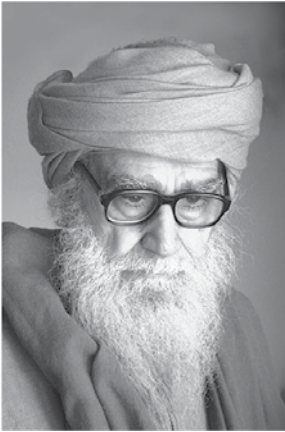
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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

PAKISTAN'S NEW PM AND THE PROPHET'S DELINKING POLICY

IMRAN KHAN'S party has emerged victorious in the recently concluded parliamentary elections in Pakistan. I listened to his victory speech and prayed for the fulfilment of his good intentions to build a positive future for Pakistan and fulfil the vision of its founder for their country's development.

In his speech, the Prime Minister-elect observed that his inspiration derives from the first state of Madinah established by the Prophet of Islam. Taking Madinah as a reference point marks a right beginning. As a nonagenarian witnessing this development, I would like to offer some words of advice. I have extensively studied the life of the Prophet Muhammad. I discovered that one of the most crucial lessons from the Prophet's life is that the key to ensuring success of any endeavour is to make the right beginning. Prophet Muhammad started his mission in Makkah in the seventh century. At that time, he had opportunities as well as problems and he opted for what can be termed as the 'delinking policy'. This right beginning was the secret of his success.

As a part of this policy, he placed controversial matters on the negotiation

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

table and at the same time, strove to avail of all the opportunities that presented themselves in the field of non-controversial issues. This delinking policy of the Prophet was based on superior wisdom. Due to this, he found great opportunities to make progress in the newly established state of Madinah.

In contrast however, after the establishment of Pakistan, instead of following such a delinking policy, its leaders attached prime importance to the acquisition of lands which they thought had been lost for various reasons.

History testifies to the fact that the delinking policy of the Prophet proved to be highly successful, both in principle and in practice. Its greatest benefit is that it affords the opportunity to undertake re-planning and focus on nation building. After the Second World War, many countries adopted this policy and experienced great success with it. Germany and Japan made tremendous progress in the field of education and scientific development.

The need of the hour is for Pakistan to adopt such a delinking policy. As pointed out by the Prime Minister Imran Khan, trade is the most promising field to ensure the progress of a country. Due to prevailing universal norms, the field of trade is fully open between India and Pakistan and it is an opportunity which must be availed of. The two countries must set all controversial issues aside and work towards building strong trade relations. Such a delinking policy will certainly ensure progress for both nations.

India and Pakistan have, in equal measure, inherited the subcontinent's historical traditions. In fact, the similarities between the two nations are so numerous that it would be no exaggeration to say that there is already a pre-existing basis for a delinking policy between the two. Now, it should be availed of in an organized manner.

India and Pakistan can work together towards the development of their respective nations. Many avenues are open to forge a healthy alliance between the two nations in the field of education, healthcare technology and the media, for instance.

Being immediate neighbours, India and Pakistan cannot afford to remain antagonists; rather, they should strive to forge cordial relations in all possible spheres in order to lead the two nations onward, along a parallel path of development. □

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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.

THE CONCEPT OF SPIRITUALITY IN ISLAM

SPIRITUALITY as a philosophy has a long history of five thousand years. In ancient Greece there were great philosophers like Plato and Aristotle whose thinking was spiritual in character. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, spiritualism is the philosophy of higher reality, which has been defined by different philosophers in different words such as, "immaterial reality", "a universal mind", "a supreme being", "spiritual cosmic force", "infinite personal God", etc.

Spirituality, being a subjective discipline, it cannot be described in objective terms. Every person is composed of two things—body and spirit. The body is related to objective science while the spirit is related to subjective science.

There are two different concepts of spirituality: God-oriented spirituality which is based on the concept of God Almighty, and man-oriented spirituality, which is based on man's soul itself being the treasure-house of spirituality. As for the former concept, spirituality results in God-realization while in the latter, spirituality results from self-realization.

The concept of self-realization is based on the assumption that the treasure of spirituality exists within man himself. And through meditation man can peep into his inner self and discover spirituality. However this concept of man-oriented spirituality is not corroborated

by Islam. According to Islam, man has no such spiritual treasure house existing independently. For man is a taker-creature. He receives everything from his Creator.

The concept of spirituality in Islam is based on the principle of God-realization. God is the treasure house of all virtues. And when man's contact with God is established, in the world of his feelings, at the psychological level, an unseen, inner revolution is brought about which is called spirituality. In this matter the relationship between God and man can be likened to an electric bulb and the power house. When the wire from the bulb is connected to the power house, electric current flows and the place is lit up. In this way, light is the result of the wire's connection to the power house of God.

Human nature is like an inflammable element. When an inflammable element like petrol comes near fire, it is ignited. Similarly, human nature is awakened when it comes in contact with God.

This finds expression in the Quran in these words:

God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The metaphor of His light is that of a niche in which there is a lamp, the lamp inside a glass, the glass like a brilliant star, lit by a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would well-nigh glow forth even though fire did not touch it. Light upon light! God guides to His light whom He wills. And God sets forth parables to men, and God has knowledge of all things. (24: 35)

This is a compound simile. 'Light' here means the guidance of Almighty, 'niche' means the human heart and 'lamp' denotes the capability to receive divine inspiration. Glass and oil elaborate upon this receptivity.

'Glass' shows that this receptivity has been lodged in the human heart, protected from outside influences, and 'oil' indicates that this receptivity is very strong and is eagerly waiting to receive inspiration.

This verse makes it clear that, on the one hand, is God, the source of inspiration, and on the other, is the consciousness of spirituality (God-consciousness) with which man is born. In this way when these two things come together, Islamic spirituality comes into existence. This is indeed another name for the awakening of God-consciousness. When it reaches its highest stage the believer's realization of God comes to that point where he begins to feel consciously in his worship that he is seeing God and that if he is not seeing God, God is seeing him. If the first type of experience is called direct spiritual experience, the second-type may be termed indirect spiritual experience.

As the Quran tells us, "Prostrate yourself and draw near." (96: 19). For God is always close to us—closer than the life blood in the jugular vein (50: 16). By total surrender to God, the soul can attain nearness to God.

Similarly, according to this *Hadith*, 'Worship God as if you are seeing Him' (*Sahih al-Bukhari*), when man engages himself in true devotion, he is linked with God at a sensory or psychological level. He comes close to God. Through an invisible cord he comes in contact with God; God's light passes through him. His entire existence comes to be pervaded by this indescribable feeling, which is called spiritual experience. This has been termed as *Rabbaniyat* in the Quran (Be people of the Lord.) (3: 79). *Rabbani* means, one whose thinking and actions are God-oriented, who has placed God at the centre of his attention. When an individual attains spirituality, his state becomes like a lamp lit all of a sudden. He undergoes spiritual experiences. His heart becomes an ocean of spiritual waves. He appears to live in this world, but he has found another far superior world for himself.

These spiritual experiences cannot be explained in words. Everything in the universe seems to convey to him a divine message. The leaves of the tree become a thrilling experience. A waft of air gives him a message of truth. He can hear divine music in the waves of the sea and the chirping of the birds.

Due to his high state of receptivity, he reaches the stage where the wavelength of God and man become one. And he is enabled, in the words of the Prophet: "to see with God's eye, to speak with God's tongue, to walk with God's foot, to hear with the ear of God."

Then all limitations vanish and his day and night are spent in God's neighbourhood. All this can be felt, not described in words. This can be explained with the example of a child who has limitless love for his mother. He knows it himself in the full sense but cannot fully describe it in words. The same is true of spirituality.

When a person is linked with the source of spirituality, he undergoes such spiritual experiences as he himself fully understands, but has difficulty in conveying to others. He may describe some external signs but he cannot describe the inner reality.

Although it is difficult to describe the inner reality of spirituality, its method of attainment can be described to a certain extent and followed by others.

First of all, man has to free his mind from confusion. It is difficult for a confused mind to undergo spiritual experiences. The basic reason

for confused thinking is that man is not able to differentiate between the real and the superficial, the relevant and the irrelevant, rational thinking and superstition, logical and illogical statements. One who thinks thus will always remain in a state of mental confusion. He will never be able to find the straight path. As a result, his spiritual journey will never be started.

On the path of spirituality one cannot be one's own guide. And one certainly needs a guide. This guide is the Quran. It is an authentic and carefully preserved book of God. That is why the Quran can be trusted as a guide by the spiritual traveller. After making the Quran one's guide, one can set out on the right track on one's spiritual journey.

This spiritual journey demands a change in lifestyle. The lifestyle for a spiritual traveller may be put briefly in these words: 'Simple living and high thinking.' Simple living means limiting one's worldly requirements to the minimum, assiduously avoiding comfort and luxury. That is

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why the Sufis used to wear coarse clothes as a symbol of the simple life. It helps the traveller in his spiritual journey. High thinking means that his thoughts are not embroiled in material things. By engaging one's mind in higher realities, one becomes a recipient of divine inspiration. This inspiration of divine light comes to his mind uninterrupted, igniting his whole existence.

The Quran attaches great importance to reflection and serious thought. There are a number of verses in the Quran that indicate that innumerable signs of God are extant in the heavens and the earth. The observance of God's signs is the greatest source of spirituality.

Spirituality called *Rabbaniyat* in the Quran, involves focussing the mind on higher, non-material realities. Materialism is the opposite, indeed, the anathema of spirituality. For attaining a spiritual state one has to rise above material things, and focus his attention on non-material things. Those who succeed in this are the spiritual or godly servants of God. As the Quran says:

Be godly servants of God. (3: 79).

The truly spiritual person does not enjoy material comforts and luxuries. He feels no desire to acquire them. They have no attraction for him, for he is engrossed in the higher realities of spiritual life. This spiritual experience that comes to him from reflecting upon the signs of God is far superior to what one experiences in leading a worldly life. The greatest source of pleasure for him is the remembrance of God. It is this reality, which finds expression in this verse of the Quran:

It is only in the remembrance of God that
hearts are comforted. (13: 28)

Here comfort means peace of mind that stems from God Almighty. For, true and lasting comfort can be achieved only through the Perfect Being. One who discovers the secret of living on an elevated plane of spirituality, has discovered a life of limitlessness. Thus if materialism is to live a life of limitations, spirituality is to live in limitlessness.

We learn from the Quran that the universe has been fashioned by God in a way that it may become a source of spiritual inspiration for man. According to the Quran, it is the quality of *Tawassum* (15: 75) that enables one to find inspiration in the universe. *Tawassum* is the ability to understand the signs of nature. That is, to observe the phenomena of the universe in order to draw lessons from them and receive spiritual nourishment from physical events.

That is to say, a truly religious person is able to convert physical events into spiritual lessons. He derives spiritual nourishment from material things. The Quran has described how godly people continuously derive such sustenance from their environment, thus maintaining their intellectual and spiritual well-being. This is elaborated upon in the Quran as follows:

This spiritual journey demands a change in lifestyle. This lifestyle for a spiritual traveller may be put briefly in these words: 'Simple living and high thinking.'

In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the succession of night and day, there are signs for men of understanding; those that remember God when standing, sitting, and lying down, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth (saying): 'Lord, You have not created these in vain. Glory be to You! Save us from the torment of the fire, Lord. (3: 190-191)

Meditation is essential for developing our spirituality. Meditation is a high kind of contemplation. It is not a state of silence, but a deep kind

of thinking process. It takes us from the seen world to the unseen, from darkness to light, from chaos to conviction, from limitation to limitlessness, from words to meaning. It is like a door through which one enters another world. In short, from the human world we reach the divine world.

The concept of meditation in Islam is based on two things, *at-tafakkur wat-tadabbur* (thinking and contemplation) (3: 191, 4: 82). Abu Darda was a senior Companion of the Prophet, after his death a man came to his wife and asked her what was the most important form of worship performed by Abu Darda. She replied: "He would spend the whole day thinking, thinking, thinking". According to this, Islamic meditation is a thinking process rather than the cessation of intellectual activity. The Quran further tells us that this intellectual process has two different directions—*al-anfus* and *al-afaq*. *Al-anfus* literally means soul, that is, inner world; *afaq* literally means universe, that is, external world.

So when a believer sees the universe functioning in a perfect manner and he finds that all the events in this vast universe always proceed towards a meaningful result, he realizes that man's life too must have a meaningful end. This makes him exclaim:

O our Lord! You have not created all this without purpose.
Glory be to you! Give us salvation in the life to come. (3: 191)

Thus the universe is a manifestation of God's attributes. Hence, it is a source of spiritual nourishment for those who want to lead a divine life on earth. For them, the whole universe becomes an important means of reaching spiritual perfection. This spiritual development continues throughout their earthly life till a time comes when they attain that degree of spirituality which the Quran calls the '*Rabbani* soul'. It is, souls such as these, who, in the life Hereafter, will inhabit Paradise. Our most compassionate Lord will say:

Dwell in Paradise; you shall have no fear, nor shall you grieve. (7: 49)

There is nothing mysterious about spirituality in Islam. It is rather the direct result of the kind of intellectual development that takes place when a believer ponders over the Creator and His creation: he gains something in the process that may be termed spirituality. The source, therefore, of Islamic spirituality is observation and reflection, rather than any sort of mysterious exercises.

We learn from the Quran that in the very creation of the universe, the signs of God lie hidden all around us. One who has developed keen

awareness when he reflects upon the things of the world is able to see the Creator in His creatures. The meaning of the creation of the universe is laid bare before him. Ultimately, the universe becomes a permanent source of spiritual inspiration. He is continuously nourished by it during his worldly experience.

A believer is not supposed to shun his normal life in order to lead a life of observation and contemplation. Islam does not advocate withdrawing from the world. He has to live in this world and participate in its activities. What is desired from him is that while fulfilling all his duties, his heart should not be attached to worldly affairs. In this way he continues to gain spiritually.

A noted scientist has said that only a prepared mind can make a scientific discovery. The same can be said of meditation. Here also a prepared soul alone can benefit from it. First of all *tazkia*, purification of the soul, has to be done through meditation. *Tazkia* aims at clearing one's heart of all kinds of negative sentiments, otherwise meditation will not work. There is a very interesting story which illustrates this point.

A milkman came to Gautam Buddha and asked him to give him *Gyan*, i.e. the realization of truth. Gautam Buddha asked: "Would you like milk to be put in an unclean container?"

The milkman said: "No. First of all we must clean the container and only then can we put milk in it."

Gautam Buddha then said: "The same is true of realization. Realization can be put only in a clean container. First of all, you have to cleanse your heart and mind of all kinds of moral pollution. Only after this cleaning process will you be able to receive the truth."

The preparation during the pre-meditation period is very important. Anyone who desires to benefit from meditation will have to complete this pre-meditation course based on simple living and high thinking.

Jesus Christ said: "Man cannot live by bread alone". It means that physical food cannot provide complete fulfilment to man. Man requires something more. This something more is spirituality. If food is needed for the nourishment of the body, spirituality is needed for the nourishment of the soul. Both are required for the complete development of the human personality.

A truly spiritual person is able to convert physical events into spiritual lessons. He derives spiritual nourishment from material things.

The human body is nourished by material food as is known to all of us. But the question arises as to how our soul receives its nourishment. The position of the soul can be likened to ore, and the position of spirituality can be likened to steel. Then how is this ore developed into spirituality? High thinking alone provides the answer to this question. This means thinking by rising above the mundane.

Meditation in Islam aims at bringing man closer to God. When man worships God, when he remembers Him, when his heart is turned

Spirituality in Islam is the direct result of the kind of intellectual development that takes place when a believer ponders over the Creator and His creation. The source of Islamic spirituality is observation and reflection.

towards Him with full concentration, when he makes a request or a plea, he establishes a rapport with his Maker. In the words of the *Hadith*, at that particular moment he comes to whisper with his Lord. He has the tangible feeling that he is pouring his heart out to God and that God in turn is answering his call.

When this communion is established between God and man, man can feel himself becoming imbued with a special kind of peace. His eyes are moist with tears. He starts receiving inspiration from God.

According to a *Hadith* the Prophet Muhammad said the highest form of worship is to pray as if you were seeing God. We learn from this *Hadith* the true sign of a superior form of worship. The true sign is for man to sense the presence of God during worship, and feel that he has come close to God. That is when he can experience the refreshing, cooling effect of God's love and blessings for man. It is this feeling of closeness to God which is the highest form of spiritual experience. In chapter 96, the Quran says:

Do *Sajdah* (prostration) and come nearer to God. (96: 19).

This *Sajdah* is the highest form of meditation. *Sajdah* is a form of unification of soul and body. According to this Quranic verse, *Sajdah* is the meeting point between God and man.

Sajdah is the sign of submission or surrender, for it is only in a state of submission or surrender that we can meet God Almighty. *Sajdah* is the final position of submission for acquiring a place very close to God. □

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PROBLEMS: A SOURCE OF SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Avail the Opportunities

EVERYONE faces different kinds of problems in life, be they rich or poor, learned or illiterate. According to the Quran, these problems are part of creation rather than an aspect of evil or form of suffering. The chapter *Al-Balad* (The City) of the Quran clearly states this fact:

We have created man into a life of toil and trial. (90: 4)

Why did God Almighty create problems or challenges? In the world of nature everything is beautiful and problem-free. The question then arises why were problems created for man to deal with? Why is man an exception to the rule of nature? What is the wisdom behind this scheme of creation?

This factor is a great blessing for man. It is meant to give man a special status that was not given to other creatures in this world. That is, he has been given the opportunity for self-development. Other creatures' lives are pre-determined in every respect. They have no options of any kind. They are as they were created. But man has total freedom. Man can make his own choices.

In human life, troubles are like stepping-stones. Man was created with great intellectual potential, but this potential is in a dormant state. In such a situation, problems are challenges; they awaken our mind, activate our nature, and serve as an incentive to turn our potential into reality.

Glaciers melt, but they melt according to the laws of nature; rivers flow, but they flow according to the shape of the earth; stars and planets move, but their orbits are pre-determined by the law of nature; trees grow, but their growth is also pre-determined. However, the case of human beings is quite different. Every person is a self-made person. Certainly, they were born under the laws of nature, but after birth, the development of their personality lies in their own hands.

Man has the capacity to think for himself. He has the ability for self-planning and self-development. He has the power to create his destiny by his own endeavours.

This freedom sometimes creates problems for man, but these problems are the price of his freedom. And then, as a condition of this freedom,

man is expected to be responsible for his actions. Accountability is a strict requirement for the humankind.

Man can exercise his freedom but he cannot change the course of nature. Those who follow the course of nature meet with success, while those who deviate from it will suffer. This suffering is nothing but a consequence of one's own wrong choice.

Now the question is, how should one face a problem? The answer is that one should follow divine guidance. Man is free, but he is free only as regards his own actions. He has no power to create a new world according to his own desires. So man must exercise his freedom within

Man must exercise his freedom within the framework of nature. He must understand divine guidance and apply it to his own life. The rest of the world is following this course under compulsion. It is only man who has been given the privilege of following divine guidance by his own choice.

the framework of nature. He must understand divine guidance and must apply it to his own life. The rest of the world is also following this course, but is doing so under compulsion. It is only man who has been given the privilege of following divine guidance by his own choice. We have a good example from the Prophet's life.

The Prophet of Islam started his mission in the first quarter of the seventh century in Arabia—an age of religious persecution. The Prophet's mission was based on the oneness of God, while the people of that time were polytheists. So they became hostile to the Prophet and in consequence the Prophet and his Companions became victims of various kinds of problems.

It was obviously an unfavourable situation for the Prophet and his Companions. At this critical juncture, God revealed a meaningful piece of guidance which is recorded in chapter ninety four of the Quran. This divine guidance is as follows:

So, surely with every hardship there is ease; surely with every hardship there is ease. (94: 5-6)

In this Quranic verse the same phrase is repeated twice. From this repetition, the Prophet drew a very meaningful inference. That is, according to the law of nature, the situation of ease is double that of the situation of difficulty. So he formulated this principle: "Two situations of ease will surely prevail over one of difficulty."

The fact is that in every situation there are problems, but at the same time there are opportunities. This is a law of nature. But it is also a law of nature that the quantum of opportunities will be more than the quantum of problems. This being so, the best course to adopt is to ignore the problems and divert one's energy to availing of the opportunities.

Complaint or protest against problems is of no value. Problems are not created by some person: they are a part of the creation plan of God. No one has the power to change the course of nature. We have no option but to accept this natural course. The above Quranic formula is the only formula which is feasible to follow in our world.

So when you face a problem, don't be negative. Be normal. Don't be disturbed. Don't allow tension to develop in your mind. Simply assess the situation and, by avoiding the problem, try to discover the opportunities. Believe with complete conviction that there are enormous opportunities waiting for you—either hidden or open. So, set about discovering them, using all your mental powers and energy.

In such a situation, lodging complaints and making protests are nothing but a waste of time. Developing anxiety is only the result of your own failure to understand the law of nature. So, be a realist and ensure your success.

All difficult situations have their problems, but at the same time there are always certain opportunities in-built in these situations. If you start your task by harping on your problems or obstacles, then it is like putting the cart before the horse. In this world there is only one starting point, and that is based on opportunities and certainly not on problems.

Leaving the problem pending is not inaction. It is, in fact, based on deep wisdom. By adopting this method you can save yourself from futile confrontation and can devote all your energy to achieving your goals.

Choosing to start with a problem is an act of emotional reaction, while launching out from the basis of opportunities shows great wisdom. It means: Start from what is possible today and you will attain, by tomorrow, what is apparently impossible. This principle is based on practical wisdom, and practical wisdom is the only workable principle in this world. □

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THE VALUE OF SILENCE

Silence is Golden

ONE of the values on which the Quran lays emphasis is silence. But it is not silence just for the sake of silence. Quranic silence is for contemplation, to understand more and more and to enhance learning. It is a culture of silence in the complete sense of the word. There is a relevant verse in the chapter *Al-A'raf* (The Heights), the translation of which is as follows:

When the Quran is read, listen to it with attention, and hold your peace, so that you may receive mercy. (7: 204)

This means when the Quran is recited, you should remain silent and listen to it with total attention. This verse gives us a general principle with a particular reference, that is, when you read or listen to or observe something, keep complete silence and try to understand, focusing all your attention on it. This kind of habit is essential if the spirit of learning is to be inculcated.

The Quran tries to develop one's thinking capacity, it tries to build a mind that can understand things in the deeper sense and analyze them with objectivity. The art of silence is necessary to be able to accomplish all these things.

There is a saying: "When I am speaking, I am not listening, and when I am not listening, I am not learning." This saying has the same meaning as is expressed in the aforementioned verse of the Quran.

Silence is not simply refraining from speech. It is more than that. When the human mind, with its unlimited capacity, stops speaking, it instantly starts thinking. The mind is a super-computer, switched on at the time of birth and continuing to function eternally. It can never be switched off. Thinking is a continuous process of the mind. The word 'rest' is not to be found in the human lexicon where the mind is concerned.

What is thinking? It is to reflect, it is to consider, it is to activate and utilize one's intellectual capacity. Bringing the intellectual faculties into play enables one to arrive at meaningful conclusions. The mind is the most elevated part of a human being and thinking is its supreme role.

It is said that man is a thinking animal. So thinking is the most important process which occurs in a human being. All the great discoveries have been the result of thinking.

Thinking is not an occasional activity of the mind: it is a continuous process, and it happens not only in the daytime, but also when you are asleep at night. The only difference at that time is that it is transferred from the conscious to the sub-conscious mind.

The issue of silence can be better understood with the following example. According to the nature of mind, speaking means to stop the process of thinking, whereas when you are silent you are allowing your mind to carry on its thinking processes without any interruption. Just as a speed breaker on the road reduces the speed of the passing vehicles, human speech breaks man's continuous journey of thought. Silence is a positive habit, it helps you to learn more and develop your personality unhindered.

After having understood the importance of silence it is equally important to learn the right use of speech. In this context the Quran has the following guidance. In chapter *Al-Nisa* (Women) it is mentioned:

There is no good in most of their secret talk, except in the case of those who enjoin charity and kindness, or reconciliation between people. If anyone does that, seeking the pleasure of God, We will give him an immense reward. (4: 114)

This Quranic verse sets the standard for secret as well as open talk, namely, soundness and utility. One can only live up to this standard by being sincere in what one says and speaking only after analyzing the matter at hand. What one says should stem from a positive mind. According to this verse, a person must refrain from futile talk. He should never indulge in talking just for the sake of talking.

Now, the question is what is the best manner of speaking? And what content of one's speech may be regarded as worthwhile? The Quranic criterion for proper social interaction is based on three principles. All three principles are described in the above verse of the Quran, which can be set forth as follows:

Charity, that is, speaking with the true giving spirit.

Kindness, that is, speaking with the spirit of well-wishing towards others.

Conciliation, that is, speaking in such a way as to create an atmosphere of harmony among people.

The Quran tries to develop one's thinking capacity, it tries to build a mind that can understand things in the deeper sense and analyze them with objectivity. The art of silence is necessary to be able to accomplish all these things.

This is what constitutes well thought-out speech and is the only legitimate use of one's tongue. Such a speech is useful to both the speaker as well as the listener. For the speaker's part, it conveys sincerity and positivity, while for the listener it is also fruitful in all respects.

The tongue is a very important organ of a human being; but it is like a double-edged sword. It has plus points as well as minus points. The right use of the tongue can produce a healthy atmosphere in society. Conversely, the wrong use of the tongue is so baneful that it may destroy the whole social fabric. The right use of the tongue can create the spirit of love among people, while the wrong use of the tongue will create hatred and intolerance in society.

Make your speech the result of positive thinking, rather than an abrupt expression of ill-considered ideas. Speak with charity, kindness and conciliation, or else remain silent.

The tongue is a great blessing for humankind. No creature other than man possesses such an asset. Meaningful speech is a very rare phenomenon in the universe. It is only human beings who have this unique capacity. No other creation can enter into a meaningful conversation. In terms of use, this unique blessing can be described in two different ways—healthy use of the tongue and an

unhealthy use of the tongue. One who uses his tongue along healthy lines will receive a double reward. This will help develop his personality and then he will receive more and more blessings from the Creator.

Therefore, make your speech the result of positive thinking, rather than an abrupt expression of ill-considered ideas. Speak with charity, kindness and conciliation, or else remain silent. □



Reality

Look at things from the point of reality and not from the point of personal desires and whims.

ISLAM: A SCHEME OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

The dictionary meaning of spirituality: The quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things. The Quranic term for spirituality is Rabbaniyat. It is the elevation of the human condition to a plane on which the mind is focused on the higher, non-material realities of a godly existence. The Prophet said: "God plants wisdom in the heart of one who shows disinclination for the world." To be a spiritual person one should understand the principles of life which Islam expects from its believers. In the following article we bring you a bouquet from the garden of Islamic principles.

PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM

SERVICE TO MAN

All the teachings of Islam are based on two basic principles—worship of God and service to man. Without putting both of these principles into practice, there can be no true fulfilment of one's religious duties.

In its followers, Islam inculcates the spirit of love and respect for all human beings. By serving human beings on the one hand they please their God, and on the other they achieve spiritual progress for themselves.

According to a *Hadith*, you should be merciful to people on earth and God on high will be merciful to you. In this way Islam links personal salvation to serving others. One can receive God's reward in the Hereafter only if one has done something to alleviate the sufferings of humankind.

According to another *Hadith*, on Doomsday God will say to a person, "I was ill, but you did not come to nurse Me." The man will reply, "God, You being the Lord of the universe, how can You be ill?" God will answer, "Such and such servant of Mine was ill. Had you gone there, you would have found Me there with him." Then God will say to another person, "I was hungry, but you did not feed Me." The

All the teachings of Islam are based on two basic principles—worship of God and service to man. Without putting both of these principles into practice, there can be no true fulfilment of one's religious duties.

person will reply, "God, You are the Lord of the worlds, how could You go hungry?" God will say, "Such and such of my servant came to you, but you did not feed him. Had you done so, you would have found Me with him." Then God will say to yet another man, "I was thirsty, and you did not give Me water to drink." That person will also say, "God, You are the Lord of the worlds, how could You be thirsty?" God will say, "Such and such servant of Mine came to you, but you did not give him water to drink. Had you offered him water, you would have found Me there with him."

Islam inculcates the spirit of love and respect for all human beings. By serving human beings on the one hand they please their God, and on the other they achieve spiritual progress for themselves.

From this, we learn the Islamic principle that if someone wants to find God, he shall first have to make himself deserving of this by helping the poor and the needy. This act becomes a means of spiritual progress for him. And there is no doubt that it is only those people who have elevated themselves spiritually, who will find God.

This culture of mercy and compassion approved of by God is not limited to human beings, but extends also to the animal world. We must be equally sympathetic to animals. The *Hadith* gives us many guidelines on how

to look after animals and treat them with fairness. There are duties laid down by God. One who is cruel to animals risks depriving himself of God's mercy.

ASSISTING OTHERS

One of the noble feelings that a believer should possess is the urge or desire to come to the assistance of others. He should fulfil their needs without expecting any return.

Coming to the assistance of others is, in essence, an acknowledgement of the blessings, which God has showered upon him. It is that person, who helps others who has something more than others. For example, one who has eyes comes to the assistance of one who has not been blessed with the precious gift of sight; an able-bodied person will give physical help to the disabled; a wealthy person will give donations to the poor; the man with resources will come to the aid of one who lacks them.

On all such occasions when one man helps out another by virtue of those blessings which God has given him, he is in fact showing his

gratitude to God for these favours. He is saying within himself, 'O God, whatever I have is all given by You. Now I am spending it in Your path, I pray to You for more blessings and mercy for both of us (the helper and the receiver).'

By assisting one's fellow being, one is not only helping another but is actually raising his own moral status. Making use of one's possessions only for oneself is to live on a level which does not befit a human being.

The proper attitude in accordance with his status is not to keep to one's self but to embrace the whole of humankind. He should lead his life as a well wisher to all, ready to help everyone, accepting others' rights over his own possessions.

After the worship of God there is no task nobler than helping other fellow beings. □

The proper attitude for man is not to keep to one's self but to embrace the whole of humankind. He should lead his life as a well wisher to all, ready to help everyone, accepting others' rights over his own possessions.



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A LESSON FROM HISTORY

The Divine Mission

THE Caliphate of Mu'awiyah has been made the subject of severe criticism. Some say that Mu'awiyah was the first ruler to introduce kingship into Islam. But, regardless of this criticism, it should be noted that the two-decade long rule of Mu'awiyah gives us an important lesson. Any sincere effort to deter Muslims from internal strife and conflict, even if it is at the cost of introducing monarchy to a political institution, will always bring fruitful results in favour of Islam. Internal conflict leads Muslims to make destructive use of their Islamic spirit, yet, once distracted from the path of factional feuds, their zeal finds an active outlet in the efforts of spreading Islam.

The call to God is a sacred mission. This mission basically entails conveying the message of God peacefully. It is a prophetic mission.

Factional conflicts among Muslims are highly deplorable. An attempt, therefore, to save Muslims from internal strife encourages them to eschew unlawful acts and harnesses their Islamic spirit to the peaceful conveying of the message of Islam. The energy or collective force that might otherwise be used in destructive activities is then devoted to the progress and consolidation of Islam. The target of Muslims' reform and the inculcation of the exalted qualities of a noble Islamic

character, from which they had earlier been diverted by factional feuds, is automatically achieved.

Had the Muslims crusading spirit been directed to the external sphere as in its earlier days, world history today would have been quite different.

The call to God is a sacred mission. This mission basically entails conveying the message of God peacefully. It is a prophetic mission.

Conveying the message of God or *Dawah* work gives the proponent the opportunity to devote himself to outside activities. For the fulfilment of his task, he turns his zeal outwards. Externally targeted, the crusading spirit is then optimally exercised.

The accomplishment of the mission of calling people to God by Muslims brings divine grace to them, and develops in the community all those exalted qualities that are considered to be the key to unity.

The history of Islam presents ample proof of the above mentioned facts. The period of thirty years after the death of the Prophet, when Muslims were engaged in the task of propagating Islam in the outer sphere, was marked by complete unity in Muslim ranks. But with the beginning of internal conflicts in the last days of Caliph Uthman, the process of the spread of Islam was stopped for ten years. However, the task of propagating Islam was resumed by Muslims when internal conflict came to an end as a result of the voluntary withdrawal of Hasan ibn Ali from the caliphate, and it continued on course for the next twenty years. Again, it was permanently disrupted due to conflict between Banu Umayyah and Banu Hashim on the issue of political reform after Amir Mu'awiyah's death in 680 AD.

Muslims are now paying the penalty for having given up the cause of spreading Islam, due to their unceasing internal conflict over the centuries. These conflicts are ostensibly taking place in the name of Islam, but in fact nothing is more un-Islamic in the world of God than this lamentable disunity.

The call to God is basically the title of the Islamic mission to convey the message of God. In the general sense, call to Islam entails the popularization of the purely basic teachings of the religion for religious harmony.

The accomplishment of the mission of calling people to God by Muslims brings divine grace to them, and develops in the community all those exalted qualities that are considered to be the key to unity.

It is an accepted fact that there is no contradiction in the fundamentals of religion. On the contrary, there are considerable differences among the people of various sects on juristic issues, which are peripheral to religion. Therefore, whenever Islam draws the public attention, the basic aspects, which are unanimously agreed upon, are given due prominence, while the controversial aspects are kept in the background.

It is a natural principle that whenever a community devotes itself to the cause of calling people to God, it is blessed with unity and solidarity. People's attention, in such circumstances, is centred upon the basic and widely accepted precepts. To raise peripheral issues would mean creating differences among them. Whenever people devote their energies to promoting the basic teachings of Islam, there is inevitably a closer understanding among them. This approach eliminates conflict and paves the way for unity. To sum up, the introduction of peripheral and lesser issues leads to confrontation, whereas adherence to basic issues creates an environment favourable to integration. □

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**



SILENCE AND GOD REALIZATION

THE Prophet of Islam usually observed silence. (*Musnad Ahmad*). Many sayings have been recorded regarding silence in the books of *Hadith*. For example:

'Hold fast to silence.' (*Ad-Darimi*)

'A believer is one who either speaks good or remains silent.' (*Musnad Ahmad*).

'Anyone who observed silence, saved himself.' (*Musnad Ahmad*).

'My silence should be silent contemplation.' (*Jami-al-Usul*).

Observing silence is not only to remain quiet but it means to contemplate. When a believer observes silence, he will ponder on his Lord, this is *Ma'rifat*. Silence is the door to *Ma'rifat*. True silence leads man to true *Ma'rifat*.

Silence provides man the opportunity to save himself from distractions. He adds explanations to his experiences and observations. He converts ordinary facts into meaningful facts. He travels from the outer world to the inner world. He establishes his contact with God and His angels at the psychological level. All these factors strengthen realization in man.

Contemplation is the source of God realization and without silence, the process of contemplation is not possible at all. Silence makes a person close to God. It provides the opportunity for a person to achieve the provision of God realization from the entire universe and this journey continues non-stop. □



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SATAN: THE TRENDSETTER OF HISTORY

Blame Culture

ACCORDING to the story of creation given in the Quran, Satan disobeyed God's command and was thus punished by Him. In this case, Satan was clearly wrong but he put the blame on God Almighty. He said: "O my Lord, because you have put me in the wrong I will make the path of error seem alluring to them on earth and shall mislead them all." (15: 39)

According to this Quranic verse, Satan was wrong but he tried to lay the blame on the Creator for his wrongdoing. Moreover, he said that he would mislead the whole of humanity and that everyone would follow his path. It is very strange that the whole of human history became a victim of this satanic design with only some exceptions that remained.

The blame culture is undoubtedly a satanic culture. It is very strange that Satan misled almost all humankind including many Muslims who claim to be followers of the Quran.

Present day Muslims are no exception. Almost all the Muslim leaders and spokespersons have adopted the same culture. During the colonial period, these Muslim leaders tried blaming the colonial powers for all their backwardness in the modern age. This was the culture during the first half of the twentieth century. Since the second half of the twentieth century onwards and to this day, almost all Muslims' spokespersons are engaged in blaming others for Muslim problems: some are blaming America, while others are blaming Israel, the Hindus and

others. 'Blame others' is a culture so widespread among Muslims that it is difficult to find an exception in this regard.

This culture is undoubtedly a satanic culture. It is very strange that Satan misled almost all humankind including those Muslims who claim to be followers of the Quran. □



UNITY DESPITE DIVERSITY

Towards National Integration

TO call people to God in today's world is to represent God. Those who perform this service are destined to be the best rewarded in the life Hereafter, for no other task in this world is of such magnitude. But, for the call to be effective, there should be unity amongst the callers. Now, there have always been differences between human beings. Even when people are united, it does not mean that there are no differences at all. In fact, unity results from integration, not *without* differences but *despite* differences.

The Companions of the Prophet evinced an exemplary unity that enabled them to bring about a great revolution throughout the world. However, their unity was not of the sort that recognized no differences. There were, indeed, considerable differences among them, both on religious and worldly matters. But, in spite of all such personal differences, they were united on the central cause of presenting Islam.

"Unity in diversity," the watchword of national integration, implies in practice the greatest sacrifice a human being can make. This sacrifice requires the vast generosity that induces the individual to tolerate a loss for the good of his fellow beings. It calls for the courage to recognize the excellence of others, despite personal differences. It demands that one be selfless enough to bow to men of higher qualities and capabilities, and that one be exalted enough in character to submit to the opinion of others. Voluntary self-sacrifice goes hand in hand with good-heartedness. It means offering the best seat to another, standing aside while others forge ahead, and remaining in obscurity so that others may stand in the limelight. Such individual sacrifice is the bedrock of collective unity.

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The most frequent reason for the differences between the members of any given society is the lack of a great common purpose. The moment a great goal emerges before them, they will themselves withdraw from petty disputes and will thus achieve the greatness of an overarching unity. □

WORDS OF THE PROPHET

Prophetic Guidance

THE following are a few teachings of the Prophet taken from the *Hadith* literature, an Islamic source second only to the Quran in religious importance. The sayings of the Prophet Muhammad have been handed down to posterity both in oral and in written form, the foundations of which were laid by the Prophet's Companions, some of whom were also his scribes. Eternal in essence, they are of value not only to Muslims, but to humanity at large.

When the Prophet Muhammad, was asked by 'Amr ibn 'Abasah what was meant by faith, he replied, 'Self-restraint and gentleness.' (*Hadith of Muslim*)

A man without trust is a man without faith. And a man who does not fulfil his promises is a man without faith. (*Hadith of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal*)

Greed and faith can never co-exist in the human heart. (*Hadith of An-Nasa'i*)

God loves those believers who labour to earn a living through lawful means. (*Hadith of At-Tabarani*)

On the Day of Judgement, what will weigh most heavily in favour of the believer will be his good morals. God abhors those who indulge in shameless talk and use indecent language. (*Hadith of At-Tirmidhi*)

Avoid falling under suspicion. For suspicion does the worst damage. Do not inquire into the lives of others. Do not pry. Do not exaggerate what others say. Bear each other no malice, and do not hurt each other's interests. And, by being brothers to each other become the servants of God. (*Hadith of Muslim*)

A merchant who hoards goods in order to raise their price is a sinner. (*Hadith of Muslim*)

Pay the labourer his wages even before his sweat dries up. (*Hadith of Ibn Majah*)

If a man commits something to your care, be sure to return it to him. Never betray anyone's trust, not even if the person concerned has failed to stand by his commitments to you. (*Hadith of At-Tirmidhi*)

When a man tells you something in confidence, you must not betray his trust. (*Hadith of Abu Dawud*) □

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.



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PEACE AND VIOLENCE

PEACE is the result of planned action, while violence is purely an aggressive response to any kind of provocation. The peace-loving person first thinks and then acts. The violent person first acts and then thinks. There is hope in peaceful action from start to finish. In violent action, however, there are false hopes to begin with, which are soon followed by frustration.

The peace-loving person stands for truth, while the violent person stands for falsehood. The way of peace runs an even course from beginning to end, while the path of violence is strewn with obstacles. In peace, construction is all, while with violence, destruction is all. A peace-loving person lives with love in his heart for others, while a violent person is consumed with hatred for others. The peaceful course ends in success, while the violent course ends in frustration and regret.

In having recourse to peaceful methods, there is nothing to be lost and everything to be gained. Violent methods, on the contrary, bring no gains, only losses. The way of peace is the way of humanity, while the way of violence is the way of animality. While an act of peace is well within the ambit of the law, the act of violence is utterly lawless.

A peace-loving person lives with love in his heart for others, while a violent person is consumed with hatred for others. The peaceful course ends in success, while the violent course ends in frustration and regret.

A peace-loving person ignores problems and avails of opportunities, while a violent person leaves opportunities untapped and remains locked in a futile struggle with problems. While an act of peace causes the orchard of love and well-wishing to blossom, an act of violence sows the seeds for a whole jungle of enmity and hatred. The culture of peace is, in short, the culture of goodness, while the culture of violence is the culture of evil.

In peace, God's rights as well as human rights are honoured. Where violence reigns, human rights as well God's rights are violated. If peace is paradise, violence is hell.

Where the opposite courses of peace and war are open to man, peace is the true choice for him. War is only a proof that he has made the wrong choice. That is a test in which he has failed. The truth is that war and violence are in no way valid options for any individual, community or nation.

Although many allurements exist in this world, they are there purely to put man to the test. They are not something desirable for man. For instance, alcohol is available, but it does not exist for man's consumption. It is there rather for man to refrain from indulging in it and thus prove his ability to distinguish between good and bad. It is a temptation, in the avoidance of which he shows that he is prudent and a man of principles. The same is true of war. Although the way of war is open to all, the noblest line of conduct is to refrain from opting for it.

The conditions prevailing in ancient times allowed for war in self-defence. But this permission to go to war conformed to the law of necessity. Now, in the present situation, this need no longer exists, therefore there should be a general ban on war.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE AGRICULTURAL AGE AND THE INDUSTRIAL AGE

As regards war, all religions and all ethical systems are agreed upon one principle, and that is, no matter how great the justification for waging war, i.e. even in an entirely lawful war, non-combatants must not be assailed or killed. The attacking of non-combatants is totally unacceptable.

Now let us look at how this principle is carried into effect in wartime. This kind of condition, i.e. the attacking only of combatants, could be fulfilled only in the agricultural age. Today, owing to scientific and technological developments, war is waged with explosive weapons which do widespread damage. When a bomb is dropped over an

inhabited area, it cannot do otherwise than kill a large number of non-combatants along with the combatants. In reality, therefore, it is well-nigh impossible to meet this condition.

This shows that, in practice, man has only two options in present times: either he refrains from war on the grounds that the observance of humanitarian provisos is impracticable. Or else he commits the crime of hurling himself headlong into war, callously ignoring all humane considerations.

When we delve deeper into the matter, we discover another important truth. We now find that in present times, on the one hand, circumstances are such as do not allow us to meet all the desirable conditions of waging war, while, on the other hand, such resources have been made available by the industrial revolution as permit us to achieve our goals by purely peaceful means. Indeed, we may expect to win far greater victories today by peaceful means than could have been done in ancient times by waging war. It must be conceded that war, as fought in former ages, has been rendered a futile exercise by the modern industrial revolution.

When we keep this reality before us, we can safely conclude that violent war was the product of the circumstances prevailing in the agricultural age. In the industrial age, this kind of war, due to its counterproductive results, has been in principle rejected. With the end of the agricultural age, the way of violent struggle has at least theoretically come to an end. Now, in the present circumstances, the peaceful method is the only method. Now no excuse can justify violence or war.

If any constructive work is to be achieved in life, it must be through peaceful efforts. Violence can only destroy life. It cannot build it.

The difference between peace and violence is aptly illustrated by the building of a bird's nest. A nest can be constructed only by peaceful effort. Violence can only destroy it, not build it. The same is true of human life. If any constructive work is to be achieved in life, it must be through peaceful efforts. Violence can only destroy life. It cannot build it.

THE PRICE OF PEACE

Everything has its price—even peace. No individual or group can have peace unless it is willing to pay for it in due measure. And that means showing willingness to suffer loss.

According to the law that governs the system of the present world, on the principle of “no risk no gain”, it is necessary for people to incur losses of different kinds. At times, they are unfairly challenged by others, they fall a prey to economic difficulties, they suffer losses of land and wealth, they meet with an accident or are deprived of certain benefits that should have been theirs by right etc. Unpleasant experiences of this kind, by the very law of nature, are undergone at one time or another in this world, by individuals, communities and nations. In such situations, if people are not willing to suffer any loss, the result will be violence. But if they are willing to make sacrifices, this will result in peace.

Opting for the way of patience and tolerance does not mean treading the path of defeat or retreat. It is, in fact, a future-oriented plan. It amounts to a voluntary acceptance of reality. This means even after losing something, one has always to remember that one is still in possession of many other things by utilizing which one can build anew.

The benefit of patience and tolerance is that, even after suffering losses, the bereft one does not lose his balance. In spite of temporary defeat, he

The power of peace is far greater than the power of violence. One who, failing to recognize this truth, adopts a violent course of action in order to achieve his goals, demonstrates his own foolishness. For peace is the way of the wise, while violence is the way of the foolish.

never loses the ability to think cool-mindedly and, by making a realistic assessment of his situation, plans his life anew. By forgetting what is lost, he reorganizes his work on the basis of whatever he still possesses. Frustration yields pride of place to planning and he sets himself to starting his life’s journey all over again.

One reliable feature of our world is that here the night is always followed by the morning. This world is full of possibilities and opportunities. Here, after losing one opportunity, man will find another. Here, if he finds one door closed to him, he will soon find many other doors open to him. In this way, there is always the possibility that, after the failure of one set of plans, he may work on another set and build his life afresh.

The truth is that in this world each piece of bad news is followed by good news. Each adverse incident gives man the good tidings that we should not fall a victim to frustration or lose heart. Rather we should muster enough courage to seek out new opportunities. Nature’s system tells

us in advance that our deprivation is not going to last forever. Soon we will be able to build a better world for ourselves. Soon our defeat will prove to be a victorious beginning.

Those who are unable to bear losses patiently tend to lapse into negative thinking. In this way, their life becomes a burden to themselves and to others. On the contrary, those who have patience and courage, build a new edifice on the ruins of the past. After the night comes the dawn, so that in its light they may continue their journey without a break. However, this noble end awaits only those who refrain from violence and engage themselves in peaceful activities, regardless of the circumstances.

PEACE—A GREAT POWER

The power of peace is far greater than the power of violence. One who, failing to recognize this truth, adopts a violent course of action in order to achieve his goals, demonstrates his own foolishness. For peace is the way of the wise, while violence is the way of the foolish.

Peace and war are not just two equal modes of achievement in the simple sense of the phrase. Rather they reflect two different standards of humanity. One who adopts the path of peace raises the level of humanity, while one who adopts the path of violence decidedly lowers it.

In moments of crisis, when the individual opts for the way of peace, he cultivates positive thinking. He raises his moral standards. He goes from strength to strength in the improvement of his own character. Indeed, he gives a practical proof of his being a human being. On the contrary, when a man opts for the path of violence to solve his problems, he slides down the slippery slope towards perdition. He makes it all too clear that he is suspect as a human being.

Inclinations towards peace or violence serve as indicators of the true character of the human being. If the former proves the humanity of the individual, the latter proves his animality, despite his appearing to be a human being.

Peaceable behaviour is indicative of self-control. Self-control is undoubtedly a very great strength: it saves man from engaging in negative activities like violence. One who does not have the power of self-control will be enraged at times of provocation and will hurl himself into violent activities. Controlling one's anger is the way of the peaceful person, while losing one's self-control when provoked is the way of the violent person.

RECONCILIATION IS THE BEST

In any controversy, one way to attempt to settle matters is for both parties to enter into violent confrontation. The better way to settle disputes is to effect a reconciliation at the very outset. Reconciliation is like a safety valve in any situation where there are conflicting interests and where tempers can become explosive. So at times of provocation, the best course to adopt is a conciliatory rather than a confrontational one. That is a law of nature.

However, it rarely happens that the reconciliation effected are exactly according to the desires of both the parties. In the majority of cases, reconciliation is possible only on a unilateral basis. That is, one party has to suppress its own inclinations and show a willingness to put an end to the dispute in accordance with other party's wishes.

Why is this kind of unilateral reconciliation better? The main benefit is that without wasting one's energy and time in unnecessary wrangling, one is able to carry on a constructive course of action, whereas a state of confrontation puts a full stop to all such activity.

History shows that any success on the part of an individual or a community has been achieved by adopting the conciliatory method. The path of clash and confrontation has never led to any genuine success in this world. Reconciliation is vital, because it gives man the opportunity to utilize available opportunities to the fullest extent, whereas confrontation leads to his entire energies being channelized into planning the destruction of others. The work of construction, therefore, is never engaged in, although the secret of true success lies in construction and consolidation rather than in destroying supposed enemies.

Many people justify violence by saying that they have been the victims of plots and conspiracies and so must put an end to this by fighting. This excuse is quite baseless. What is generally regarded as a plot is, in actual fact, a manifestation of that plan of nature which has been established in the present world as a natural law.

In the present world, the actual problem for a community is not that it has enemies plotting against it. The actual problem is that it has failed to purge itself of the weaknesses that provide others with the opportunity to exploit it. An established state of peace is a safeguard against this kind of exploitation. Violence means rendering oneself insecure by breaking the defence line. □

SOCIETY

Mutual Respect

THE teachings of Islam on the subject of multi-religious society amounts to an easily applicable formula for mutual respect. It teaches that all believers, whatever their elected religion, must have due reverence for the religions adhered to by others.

What establishes the need for such a formula is the edifice of religion being founded on the total conviction that it is the whole truth. To have any followers at all, a religion must carry that conviction. It is in the nature of things. But religious conviction alone is not a broad enough base on which to form a just society, particularly if that conviction is publicly expressed by different groups through the widely differing practices of different faiths. In the multi-religious context, it also takes broadmindedness, compassion and fellow feeling. Only when in possession of these virtues can members of society display their acceptance in their dealings with others, which will ensure a lasting peace.

The principle of mutual respect is a natural one and is to be found in all areas of civilized living. One of the major demands made by Islam is that this natural principle be upheld and acted upon by the adherents of different religions, so that societal structures may be strengthened by stable and enduring human relationships.

For the greater part of his life, the Prophet of Islam lived in a society where adherents of other religions existed side by side with believers in Islam. The Prophet's behaviour towards the former was invariably that of respect and acceptance.

One of the major demands made by Islam is that the natural principle of mutual respect be upheld and acted upon by all, so that societal structures may be strengthened by stable and enduring human relationships.

At a time when the majority of the denizens of Makkah were of different beliefs, his conduct consistently conveyed his high moral character. On the one hand, he communicated to them the message of *tawhid* (oneness of God) with love and kindness and, on the other, fulfilled all of their human rights. That is why the people of Makkah irrespective of their beliefs had such great confidence in him—to the point of entrusting their belongings to his care. This they continued to do right up to the last days of his stay in Makkah.

After the attainment of his prophethood, he lived in Makkah for a period of thirteen years, later migrating to Madinah, where he lived for ten years until his death. For about half of this period in Madinah, he was living among people belonging to different religions. The Prophet devised a constitution for these people, known in history as *Sahifa-e-Madinah* (Madinah Charter).

This charter expressly mentioned that issues concerning the different groups domiciled in Madinah would be decided on the basis of their own religious traditions—those of Muslims according to their Islamic traditions, and those of polytheists and Jews according to their respective traditions. This principle of Islam was intended to apply at all places where Muslims lived along with adherents of other religions. This *sunnah* or practice of the Prophet, for a pluralistic society carries the same moral authority as other of his practices.

Islam recognizes no difference between Muslims and people of other faiths from the ethical standpoint. The rights granted to a Muslim are exactly the same as those granted to others.

Islam recognizes no difference between Muslims and people of other faiths from the ethical standpoint. The rights granted to a Muslim are exactly the same as those granted to others.

A saying in *Sahih al-Bukhari* gives us a telling example of how this principle should in practice be followed. According to this report when the Prophet was in Madinah, he saw a funeral procession passing along a street. The Prophet was seated at that time. On seeing it, the Prophet stood up in deference to the deceased person. One of his Companions

said: "O God's messenger, it was the funeral of a Jew (not a Muslim)." The Prophet replied: "Was he not a human being?"

This tells us that every human being is worthy of respect. There might be differences between people in religion, culture and traditions but it is incumbent upon everyone to accord equal respect to others as all men and women are creatures of one and the same God. All are descendants of Adam and Eve.

Everyone has certainly the right to adopt one religion according to their beliefs. But with that choice comes the ineluctable responsibility of giving respect in full measure to adherents of other faiths and, in the light of those faiths, giving them what is ethically their due. □

SUCCESS THROUGH SUPERIOR SOLUTIONS

Brainstorming

THINKING is an incomprehensibly strange art of our world. A number of books have been written on this subject which, as well as adding to human knowledge, have increased our sense of wonder. The following are the titles of some of these books: *Towards a Theory of Thinking*, Dr. Rapaport (1951), *The Psychology of Thinking*, W.E. Vinacke (1952), *Thinking*, F.C. Bartlett (1958), *Productive Thinking*, Max Wertheimer (1959).

The research on which these books are based has brought to light much new information on the brain. One fact which has emerged is that a very important process takes place within the human mind which the psychologists call 'brain-storming'.

A process called brainstorming has been offered as a method of facilitating the production of new solutions to problems. These unrestricted suggestions increase the probability that at least some superior solutions will emerge. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 19/357)

Researchers tell us that when a human being is facing a crisis situation, latent capabilities are aroused which enable him to engage in this process of brainstorming. This in turn enables him to discover a superior solution to the problem facing him. Success then follows as surely as night follows day.

This is one of God's great mysteries—how He has made our difficulties the ladders to our success. □

Researchers tell us that when a human being is facing a crisis situation, latent capabilities are aroused which enable him to engage in this process of brainstorming. This in turn enables him to discover a superior solution to the problem.



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ADJUSTMENT WITH PEOPLE

Healthy Relationships

THERE are many people who are excellent at managing work. They are intelligent and successful. But, the same people are failures when it comes to managing relationships, whether it is with their parents, siblings, spouses or with their children. What is the reason for this failure? Why doesn't their intelligence or qualification help them to manage their relationships wisely?

The answer to this lies in understanding and accepting that the skills required for healthy relationships are totally different from the skills required for success in work and learning. A person who works with the machines has to have two types of skills, one is about the machine and the other is about professional interaction with colleagues—managers and junior colleagues. Both are equally important. Whereas, developing and maintaining healthy relationships—both with family and in professional life—requires skills in the art of life management. The art of life management refers to two things—one is to understand oneself and the other is to be aware of the world around us. Understanding oneself refers to knowing one's capabilities; and being aware of the world around us refers to knowing about human nature and the creation plan of God for humankind.

With this knowledge, one may plan one's life in a realistic manner and make improvements whenever and wherever required. To have successful relationships one should give precedence to using reason over emotions. Even in blood relationships, rational management is important. Rational management has to be cultivated through conscious efforts.

Every human being is endowed with certain uniqueness. This difference itself is not evil. There is great benefit hidden in it. Differences should be seen as representing different capabilities. If everyone had uniform capabilities they would be able to achieve little. Accepting others' uniqueness as beneficial is the first skill in cultivating good human relationships.

At the very foundation of human life another basic skill to be continuously nurtured is the skill of living a purposeful life. Strange as it may sound, it is very important. Without a purpose, humankind will not have any motivation to avoid unnecessary conflicts with others. Purpose gives direction and a plan which includes maintaining good

relationships with people who we deal with so that any unpleasantness with others does not become an obstacle to the achievement of one's goals.

Setbacks in relationships are often caused by "unnatural expectations", and these must be avoided. We have to pay the price of anything we seek in this world. For example: If you want to enjoy certain comforts, you have to work for it. If you want to make good use of a gadget, you have to pay in terms of doing whatever it calls for maintenance. This is the law of nature. Anyone who only wants something but is not ready to pay the price has an unnatural desire which will never be fulfilled.

Another unnatural desire common amongst people is to wish that they have or had a perfect spouse, perfect children, or a father like their friend has etc. Such thinking is unrealistic; no one is perfect or ideal. No one is an embodiment of all good qualities. It is a law of nature that if one has some particular good qualities, he will be lacking in others. It is the tendency of man to look at the negative aspects of people rather than their positive aspects. This is a destructive tendency which comes in the way of good relationships. However, if we focus more on the positive aspects rather than the negative ones, we can develop healthy relationships.

Try as we may, disagreements are bound to happen. These disagreements can sometimes escalate into serious discord. One should diffuse such situations. Anger being the major reason for relationships going sour, it should be quickly brought under control. Anger begets hatred and hatred eventually leads to evil. In any relationship ninety percent of the trouble starts due to anger.

Anger is a natural phenomenon. The only solution to anger is to control it. Anger in itself is not an evil. It is evil when one fails to control it and it spoils the lives of others. Uncontrolled anger leads to rage which is a temporary provocation and an undesirable reaction. It is like a fire which flares up for a short duration and then dies down on its own if it is given no further fuel. If people realized this, anger would not result in any serious disharmony.

The above understanding leads us to the question of how to control anger. The good news is that it can be done. The law of nature regarding anger is that it gets activated only for thirty seconds and if it is checked, it gets defused like a balloon. Therefore if a person checks his anger and does not allow it to flare up, the negative feeling will ebb away naturally, without there being any negative outcome.

It is necessary for both the parties involved to understand this natural law which can be termed as 'the 30 second formula'. The Creator has placed necessary safeguards within nature itself. The only thing we should do is to learn these things provided by nature and apply them in our lives. The way of nature is silent communication. Those who can understand this language of silence will be able to listen to the voice of nature and benefit from it.

Adopting "wait and watch" policy is another skill which can help us with our relationships. The policy of waiting refers to waiting for a better future: waiting for tomorrow to bring something we have not received today. This is undoubtedly a matter of great wisdom, as it is possible that you may receive tomorrow what you have not received today. People often make the mistake of desiring others to come up to their expectations immediately or instantly. They ignore the need for time. It is not possible in this world to find today what you are not destined to find until tomorrow. It is only after waiting that one receives what one is waiting for. This is another law of nature, and no law is greater in this world than the law of nature.

To sum up, one can say that to live in harmony with people one should adopt a realistic approach, look at things in a broad perspective , accept the uniqueness of each one including ours and understand human nature and most important of all live in accordance with it ourselves which means being 'complex free souls'. □

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HOW STRANGE!

Death, the Greatest Teacher

HOW strange it is that with someone's death, a throbbing life is blotted out all of a sudden! A smiling face is extinguished in a second, as if it were even more valueless than a bit of dust!

A soul, with all its hopes and dreams, is suddenly removed completely from sight, as if its hopes and dreams had no reality at all! Life is enormously meaningful, but death appears to make it meaningless. No matter how free human beings seem to be, they are utterly helpless in the face of death!

Every day, innumerable people enter through the door of death. Every day, hundreds of thousands of people set off from their homes but on the way to their destination they are caught by God's angels, who take them to the stage of the Hereafter, instead of to where they wanted to go.

Every person has built in their mind an entire world full of hopes and desires. They imagine they are advancing towards the world of their hopes; that they are walking in the direction of the 'tomorrow' of their dreams. But very soon they realize that they are heading, not to the world of hopes, but, rather, to the world of God, towards the Hereafter. People are simply unaware of where they are heading and where they will arrive.

People generally give their all for the sake of their children. But before they can see and rejoice in their children's future, death drags them off to their own future—the eternal Hereafter—for which they had made no preparation at all. People build magnificent houses, hoping to live there in comfort, but even before they can enter their dream-houses, death grabs them away. People struggle to become as economically rich as possible, thinking that this will carry them to the pinnacle of honour and progress, but very soon they learn that what awaits them is just a cold, silent grave.

For human beings, their desires and dreams are very dear, but death snatches all these in a trice! If we were to remain aware of our impending death, we would never go astray. The secret of a successful life is to agree to live within one's limits, and for this purpose, death is the greatest teacher. □

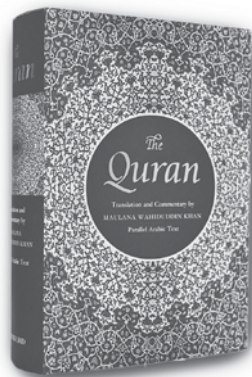


THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures

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

Translated from Arabic and commentary by
Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



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

S'aad; By the Quran, full of admonition! Those who deny the truth are steeped in arrogance and hostility. How many generations have We destroyed before them! And they cried out when it was too late to escape. (38: 1-3)

The Quran calls upon people to accept the realities that already exist in human nature. No statement of the Quran has so far been found to be against facts, which is sufficient to prove the veracity of the Quran. If people still do not accept the Quran, their rejection is certainly not based on arguments, but stems from the fear that they may lose their sense of self-importance if they accept a greater Truth.

The Quran is the continuation of that call to the oneness of God which was propagated by various prophets throughout history. In every age, those who rejected this call were destroyed. The non-believers of the present age should learn a lesson from the fate suffered by non-believers of the past.

They are surprised that a warner should come to them from among themselves. They say, 'This is a magician, a great liar. Does he make all the deities out to be one God? This is indeed a strange thing. Their leaders departed, saying, 'Walk away! Hold fast to your deities. This is clearly a conspiracy. We have not heard of any such thing in the old religion. This is nothing but a fabrication. Was the message sent only to him out of all of us?' In fact, they doubt My warning; in fact, they have not yet tasted My punishment. (38: 4-8)

The Prophet Muhammad is a great name today, because subsequent history has glorified him. But when, in the seventh century AD, he

announced his prophethood, it was difficult for people to believe that this ordinary-looking-person was chosen to receive God's revelations. It is crucial to understand that once history has taken shape, even a blind man can recognize a prophet, but before history takes shape immense sincerity is required to acknowledge a prophet.

The exceptionally different style of the Quran used to stun its opponents, but the ordinary image of the bearer of the Quran would cast them into doubt. Bent on rejecting him, these people used to denigrate the Prophet in various ways, they called him a magician or a liar. They could not reconcile themselves to the possibility of their great men being in the wrong as against an ordinary man.

'Hold fast to your deities'. These words refer to the paucity of argument of those who oppose the Quran. Finding themselves helpless they try to keep their people away from the powerful effect of the Quran with the help of age-old traditions.

Do they possess the treasures of the mercy of your Lord, the Mighty, the Great Bestower? Have they control over heavens and earth and whatever [lies] between them? Then let them climb up to heaven by ropes: this host too, among other hosts, is bound to suffer defeat. Before them the people of Noah denied the truth, as did the 'Ad and Pharaoh of the Stakes, and the tribe of Thamud, and the people of Lot, and the dwellers of the Wood—these were the confederates. There was not one of them but treated their messengers as liars, so My punishment rightly overtook them: they have only to wait for one single blast [of punishment]: it shall not be delayed by one whit. They say: 'Our Lord! Hasten on for us our fate before the Day of Reckoning.'

(38: 9-16)

God's blessing of guidance is not meted out in such a way that one who is favoured with worldly greatness is also granted God's guidance. If worldly greatness were enough to make people great in the eyes of God, it would have become possible for them to confer God's grace on anybody they liked, while withholding blessings from all others. But the fact is that God bestows His grace by His own standards and not by those laid down by human beings on the basis of appearances.

Those who rejected the Prophet used to say, 'Bring upon us God's punishment with which you are threatening us.' The non-believers were so audacious because they believed that they were not going to face God's punishment. The previous communities had also considered themselves safe and behaved insolently with their prophets, but all of them were destroyed. □

ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

Does Islam need a liberal interpretation?

It is often said that in present times Islam is in need of a liberal interpretation. The question is when Islam in itself is liberal, why does it need a liberal interpretation?

The original Islam, which was presented by the Prophet and followed by the Companions, does not have any aspect that needs to be liberalized. It neither consisted of extensive rituals or customs, nor did it sanction extremism. The need for liberalization is for the practices and innovations of present-day Muslims that are considered to be Islam whereas the original Islam has nothing to do with these innovations.

Today, the term 'liberal' is used to convey non-extremism. The Quran alludes to this principle in the following verse, "Do not become extremists in matters of religion." According to a *Hadith*, the Prophet Muhammad said, "Do not be an extremist in religion." Extremism therefore is *prima facie* shunned in Islam.

In present times, many who claim to be Muslims have become extremists. Because there is unawareness in general about what original Islam was and how it was practiced by the Companions of the Prophet.

What does a liberal interpretation of Islam mean? It means to find an interpretation of Islam that gives importance to peace, does not obstruct freedom, allows tolerance and shuns intolerance. But the original Islam already has all of these attributes. What we see today among certain Muslims is later-day innovation. In the full sense of the word, Islam is a religion of peace, tolerance, compassion and justice. The need therefore is to revive Islam and not to come up with a new interpretation.

Why is acknowledgment important?

A glass of water is such a blessing that if all the people in the world come together and spend all their money, even then a glass of water cannot be created. The supply of water to mankind shall continue only if the One who is supplying continues to supply, otherwise not.

Media extensively features reports that allude to the next world war which would be on the issue of water unlike the previous world wars which were fought for land. The issues of water shortage and water

pollution are on the rise. With 95% of water resources polluted already, water resources are fast depleting. The water resources that exist are the only ones that exist. We cannot create more by ourselves.

While a human being cannot even create a glass of water, there are millions of other things that have been bestowed to him by a Benefactor! To acknowledge and be grateful for these blessings is the highest duty of an individual. Religion serves as a reminder of this fact.

If you do not acknowledge a glass of water, you have no right to drink it. Availing of blessings like food, water, air or sunlight has a price, that is, acknowledgement of the Giver. Those who do not perform this duty should remember that they cannot evade accountability.

How should one deal with the crises in life?

Once the Prophet was travelling from Makkah to Taif with 12,000 people. They reached a valley which had a narrow pass and the issue was how it should be crossed. The Prophet gave a solution and told his Companions to change their formation from wide across to narrow or inline.

When a new situation emerges, one should think and reassess the matter. A human being possesses pre-crisis thinking which fails at the time of crisis, therefore he is required to develop a post-crisis thinking to deal with the emerging situation.

When the Prophet's opponents in Makkah eventually decided to kill him, the Prophet had two options; either confront his opponents stating that Makkah was also his homeland and he had the right to live in it and as a consequence die fighting for the cause. The other option was to leave Makkah and migrate to another city. The Prophet chose the latter option, thereby demonstrating how one should develop post-crisis thinking to resolve a situation of crisis.

How does thinking about death transform a person?

People in the present-day are being caught up in the culture of 'right here, right now' and are unable to think about death. If a person is able to do so, a new thinking would emerge in him and he would strive to prepare himself for the eternal world of the life Hereafter. Death would become a reminder to him of the life to come. He would be cautious about his words, thoughts and dealings with people. His concern would be the development of a sublime character so that in the Hereafter he can be selected as an inhabitant of the noble abode of Paradise. He would rise above the superficialities of the present world and become acquainted with the higher truths of life.

Death is not the end of life but a door, on either side of which there exists a world. One side has an incomplete and temporary world, while the other side has a complete and permanent world. On one side, there is a world filled with problems and on the other side, there is a problem-free world. Unfortunately, people take death only in the negative sense, which brings despair and hopelessness. The positive concept of death has a very high meaning—one that gives you a ray of hope and courage.

What is the position of freedom of expression in Islam?

Islam lays great emphasis on freedom of expression. Blasphemy in Islam is a subject of intellectual discussion rather than a subject of physical punishment.

Before the advent of Islam, holding beliefs different from that of the establishment was considered a punishable act. People used to be punished on matters of belief just as they would be if they committed a social crime. This old practice of religious persecution was abolished by Islam. In Islam the culture of dissent and freedom of expression is given utmost importance. The concept of blasphemy therefore is completely alien to the original teachings of Islam.

Some Muslims advocate the theory that freedom of expression is good, but that no one has the right to hurt the religious sentiments of others. This theory is quite illogical. Freedom is not a self-acquired right. It is God, who, because of His scheme of putting man to the test, has given him total freedom. Then the modern secular concept of freedom is that everyone is free, provided he does not inflict physical harm on others. In such a situation, the above kind of demand by Muslims is tantamount to abolishing two things: first, it abolished the divine scheme of granting freedom to everyone, and second, it abolishes the modern secular norm. Muslims' demand that others should not have the freedom to hurt their religious sentiment is thus invalid, as it can never be achieved. □



RE-ENGINEERING MINDS TOWARDS PEACE

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

Peace Foundation's Aims and Objectives

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

THE WAY TO PEACE

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

Ignore the problems and avail the opportunities. □

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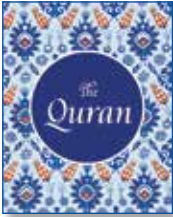
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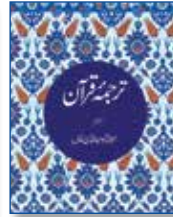
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