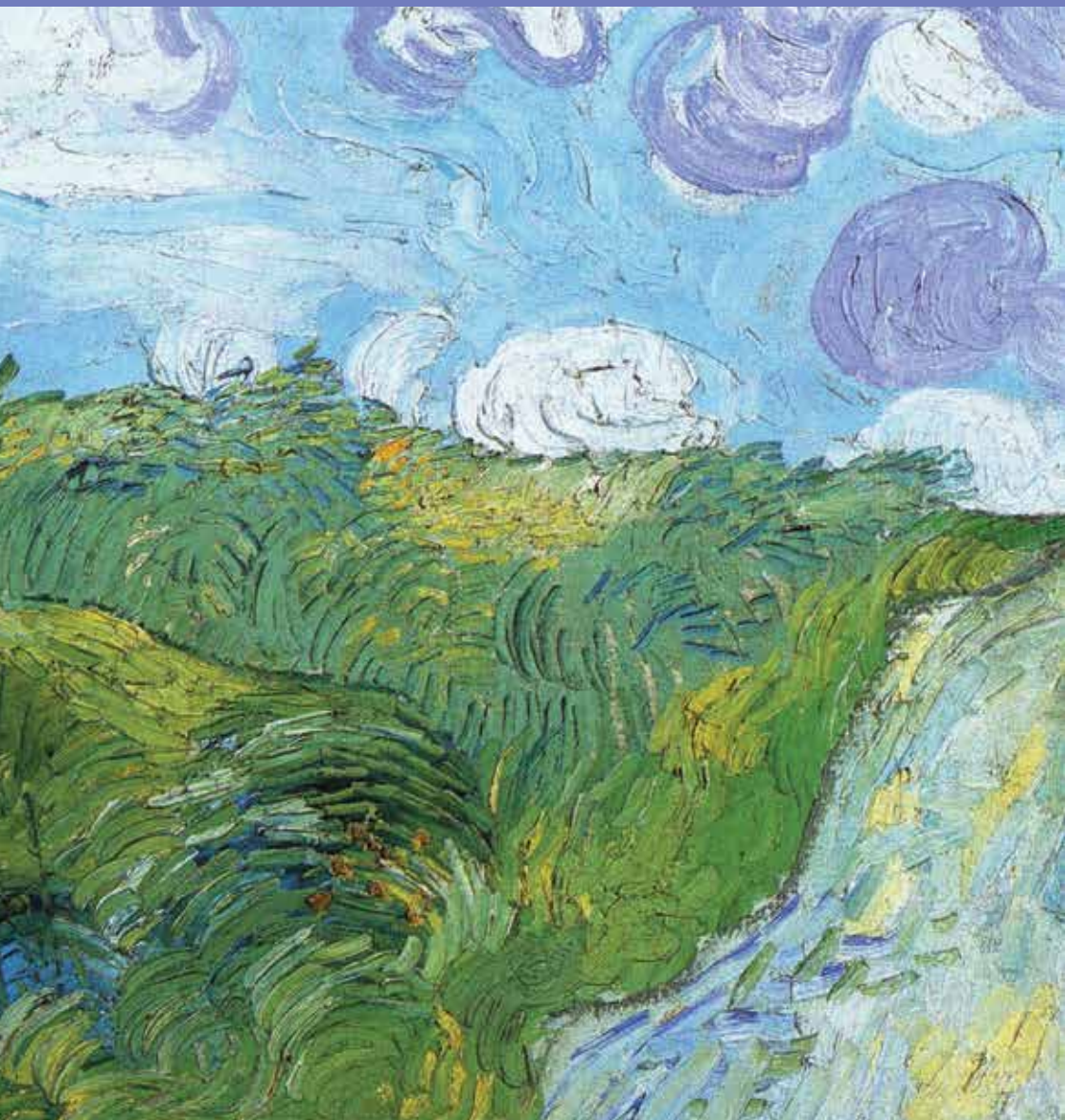


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Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

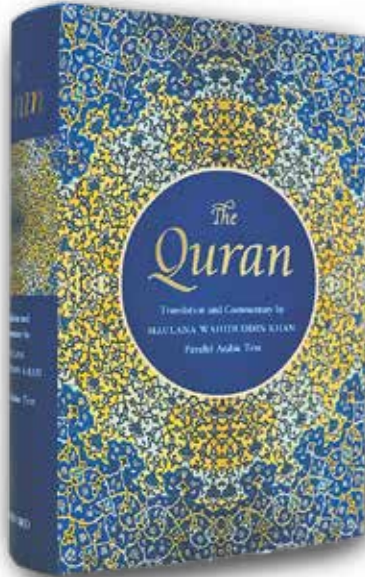


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SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

ISSUE 30, JUNE 2015

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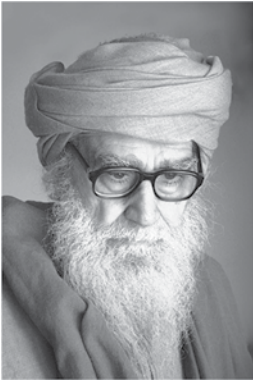
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



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 third highest civilian honour in India, and the Demiurgus Peace International Award. He has been called 'Islam's spiritual ambassador to the world' and is recognised 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.

YOU CANNOT HANG AN IDEOLOGY

ACCORDING to media reports of April 11, 2015, an Egyptian court has confirmed the death sentence on Muslim Brotherhood chief Mohammed Badie and thirteen others for planning attacks against the state. Hundreds of people have been sentenced to death following the removal of President Mohamed Morsi in 2013.

Dispute between the Muslim Brotherhood and the political authorities of Egypt has been going on for almost half a century now. The political leaders of Egypt have been dealing sternly with the Muslim Brotherhood, but have failed to undermine the influence of the Brotherhood in the region.

This dispute between the two began soon after Egypt's King Farouk was deposed in 1952. Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949), the founder of Muslim Brotherhood was shot dead on a street in Cairo on February 12, 1949. Sayyid Qutb, another leader of Muslim Brotherhood was executed on August 29, 1966.

Despite this stern action by Egypt's political rulers, the Muslim Brotherhood has survived. In fact, during the general elections in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood leader, Dr. Mohamed Morsi, received

1. The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims 2012, Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Jordan.

such support that he became the first President of Egypt. However, after completing one year of his presidential term, a military coup was staged, and Dr. Morsi was deposed and imprisoned. He has also recently been sentenced to death for his previous involvement against the political powers.

Why did the political bosses of Egypt fail to curb the Muslim Brotherhood? The reason is that the Muslim Brotherhood is based on an ideology, and it is not possible to bring an end to the influence of an ideology by force. Even if some leaders are hanged, new leaders will emerge and keep the ideology alive.

It is a fact that the Muslim Brotherhood is based on a wrong ideology. Its leaders have wrongly interpreted Islam in political terms. They believe that without establishing Islamic rule in Egypt they would not find entry into Paradise.

Those Arabs who want to curb the Muslim Brotherhood must evolve a counter ideology. The Muslim Brotherhood is based on the political interpretation of Islam. Today, the need of the hour is to present the non-political interpretation of Islam. Only this kind of interpretation would change the minds of people. Without changing the political mind it is not possible to curb the Muslim Brotherhood at all.

The Muslim Brotherhood is the phenomenon of an ideology—the politicized version of Islam. Politics has to be eradicated from Islam. Without a counter ideology, the political bosses of Egypt will never be able to cope with the problem presented by the Muslim Brotherhood. □

Maulana Wahiddudin Khan
editor@thespiritofislam.org



Obey Conscience

It is the conscience which makes man feel repentant soon after he makes a mistake. Man should admit his mistakes instantly so that his conscience stays alive. Otherwise, his sense of repentance would gradually begin to diminish until it fades away.

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.



MANIFESTO OF PEACE

PEACE is the only religion for both—man and the universe. In a peaceful environment all good things are possible, whereas in the absence of peace, we cannot achieve anything of a positive nature, either as individuals, or as a community. The same holds true at national and international levels.

What is Peace?

Scholars have defined peace thus: “Peace is the absence of war.” Peace in fact means the absence of a situation of war or violence.

While this defines the essence of peace, there are some who consider it to be inadequate. They say that peace should be accompanied by justice; that peace devoid of justice is no peace. But setting such a condition for the attainment of peace is impractical. This is because peace on its own does not bring justice. That is, justice is not necessarily an element of peace. What peace does, in actual fact, is open up opportunities. It creates favourable conditions that would enable us to strive for justice and other constructive ends. Peace is always desirable for its own sake. Everything else comes after peace, not along with peace.

The Hudaybiya Peace Treaty

The Prophet of Islam provides a clear historical example in his method of negotiating of the Hudaybiya peace treaty. On this occasion he brought matters to a successful conclusion by unilaterally accepting the conditions of his opponents. In this peace treaty, the Prophet had apparently not received justice or his rights. What was in effect a 10-year

no-war pact, gave the Prophet an opportunity to work uninterruptedly on a constructive programme which would otherwise have been impossible. By means of this peaceful non-political programme, the Prophet and his companions were able to consolidate themselves so thoroughly that they had no need to wage war: their opponents were left with no option but to surrender.

This Hudaybiya peace treaty of the Prophet of Islam was like a peace 'bomb', its positive effects spread far and wide. The result of this treaty shows that the peace 'bomb' is mightier than the violent bomb. Peace is life, and violence means death. Peace promotes construction and progress, while violence leads to destruction and annihilation. Peace enhances creativity, whereas violence does the very opposite. The power of peace is based on love, while that of violence is based on hatred. The capacity of peace is unlimited, while that of violence is limited.

Some Historical Examples

Japan's industrial cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, were destroyed by the atom bombs in 1945. After the holocaust, Japan abandoned violence and adopted a peaceful course, which it termed a reverse course for its national development. As a result within forty years, Japan rose rapidly to become a great economic power.

Peace means life, and violence means death. The power of peace is based on love, while that of violence is based on hatred. The capacity of peace is unlimited, while that of violence is limited.

India's freedom struggle is an excellent example of the use of peaceful methods to achieve political ends. India's freedom struggle began in 1857. But even after 60 years of sacrifice, the desired political goal remained a distant dream. Then, in 1920, M.K. Gandhi emerged as the leader of the freedom struggle. Taking a U-turn, he abandoned the violent method and opted for a peaceful course of action for the freedom movement.

Things took a miraculous turn after that, leaving the British nonplussed. A non-violent Gandhi had taken away from the British any justification for the use of violence. The following anecdote is an apt illustration. When Gandhi launched his freedom movement by following a peaceful method instead of resorting to violent means, a British officer sent a telegram to his secretariat in these words:

"Kindly wire instructions how to kill a tiger non-violently."

The success which was not forthcoming, even after a long and violent struggle, was achieved by peaceful methods in a short period of time.

Peace—A Complete Code of Conduct

Both violence and peace have wide connotations. Violence includes everything from hatred to war while peace spreads across the range from tolerance to love. Violence, war and peace are both the results of human thinking. Those who engage in violent activities are the worst of humanity, while those who opt for peaceful behaviour are the best. Peace means normalcy, and normalcy provides opportunities that favour the growth of a healthy environment. A natural condition should prevail, where people can live and work without any hindrance.

Violence closes the doors to positive activities, peace opens the doors to healthy activities, creating an atmosphere of positive living for the individual, society and the nation at large. All achievements are possible in an environment of peace. If violent situations hamper opportunities, peace helps favourable situations to flourish, where man's creative abilities can be nurtured and developed.

*Never lose your
peace of mind
even in moments
of crisis. Respond
positively, even
in negative
situations.*

While peace is a boon for human society, violence is a curse. Peace is an asset, and violence, a liability. Peace is love and violence is hatred. Peace is amity and violence is enmity. Peace brings people closer and violence distances them. Peace fosters a high level of human culture, whereas violence breeds a jungle culture. Peace elevates humanity to the level of civilized social existence, whereas violence causes a descent to barbarism. Peace promotes life, while violence is the harbinger of death and destruction. Peace highlights the good elements of a society, while violence does the very opposite.

Jesus Christ said, "Love your enemy." This means, live with your enemy peacefully, i.e. win over your enemy by using the power of peace. Human history testifies that peace affords everything, while violence yields nothing.

Peace Turns Minus into Plus

German psychologist, Alfred Adler, has said that humans alone possess the unique 'power to turn a minus into a plus'. What enables man to perform this extraordinary feat?

The human brain is a treasure house of unlimited power. When man loses his peace of mind at a time of crisis, he loses the ability to use this powerful resource, i.e. his intelligence, in a positive way. Negative thinking is an obstacle to human development, while positive thinking

is a life-giver, a stimulant of human capacities. Therefore, when an individual or a nation is able to maintain peace in every situation, infinite possibilities open up. This is when 'minuses' can be turned into 'pluses'. The following two examples will illustrate this point. One is of a societal nature and the other is at the individual level.

The Prophet of Islam provides us an excellent historical example. In his famous book *The 100*, Dr. Michael Hart has observed: "Muhammad was the only man in history who was supremely successful at both the religious and secular levels."

*Take your share
without usurping
that of others.
Satisfy your desires
without thwarting
others and fulfill
your ambitions
without denying
others the right to
do likewise.*

How was the Prophet of Islam able to achieve this supreme success? though he repeatedly faced moments of crisis in his mission, he never once lost his peace of mind. This made him respond positively, even in negative situations. By avoiding confrontation and availing of opportunities, it became possible for him to convert disadvantage into advantage. British writer, E.E. Kellett, describes this achievement of the Prophet:

"He faced adversity with the determination to wring success out of failure."

The life of the Prophet was a practical example of this principle.

Swami Vivekananda, an Indian saint, was once invited to the home of one of his friends who wanted to test his mettle. The Swamiji was ushered into a room where the sacred scriptures of all major religious traditions were placed on a table, one on top of the other. The arrangement was such that the Gita, the Hindu religious scripture, was placed at the bottom, and others placed on top of it. Swamiji's friend was sure that he would be provoked by this arrangement. So he drew the Swamiji's attention to the books placed on the table, and asked him to comment. Swamiji simply smiled and said:

"The foundation is really good."

This beautiful response from the Swamiji was due to the fact that his peace of mind was not disturbed.

The Way to Attain Peace

Peace is essential for a better way of living—peace of mind, peace in the family and peace in nature. Today, in our modern, technological world,

man apparently has access to everything he desires. In the absence of peace, however, everything has been rendered meaningless. What is needed to redress the balance is love, compassion, tolerance, forbearance and the spirit of co-existence.

How can we attain peace? The formula is very simple. Take your share without usurping that of others. Fulfil your needs without depriving others of theirs. Satisfy your desires without thwarting others and fulfil your ambitions without denying others the right to do likewise. In short, solve your own problems without creating problems for your fellow creatures. Peaceful co-existence is the only way of existence in this world.

However, a peaceful life can be achieved only when human beings understand their limitations. According to the Divine law, you can take from the world whatever will satisfy your need—not your greed. You may do business with others but you should not exploit them. You may also establish your individuality, but not at the cost of the family and society. You may lead your life by maintaining social structures and tradition and not by destroying them. You have the freedom to lead your own life, but also care for the rest of society and not neglect it. Resources may be utilized for the benefit of humanity, but not for the sake of exploitation. You are free to use peaceful methods, but you are not entitled to use violence. You can make use of nature, but only by maintaining its balance: the equilibrium of nature must never be upset. You have the freedom to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, but not to manufacture destructive weapons. You are at liberty to nurture feelings of love and compassion, but not to give way to hatred and prejudice. You are free to fulfil your physical desires, but not by spiritually killing your soul. In short, you have the freedom to enjoy life by sharing with others, but certainly not by eliminating them.

Solve your own problems without creating problems for your fellow creatures. Peaceful co-existence is the only way of existence in this world.

Price of Peace

Everything in this world has its price and this is particularly true of peace. If we want peace, we should be ready to pay for it or else stand deprived of it. What is the price of peace? It is simple tolerance. We live in a world of differences, and these differences cannot be eliminated. Therefore, we have only two options: tolerance or intolerance. While the latter leads to violence, the former ensures peace. Where there

is tolerance there is peace, and where there is intolerance, there is war and violence. There is only one universal formula of tolerance for peace, applicable at all levels - to one's family life, social life, and at the international level. Peace requires us to foster a culture of tolerance, whereas intolerance can lead only to war.

Nature—A Model of Peace

The root cause of most of our problems is traceable to our deviation from the peaceful model of nature — the best model for us to follow. All the dilemmas we face today arise because we have not followed nature's lead.

The stars and planets are in continual motion in their orbits, but they never collide with one another. This shows man how to proceed to his destination in life without coming into conflict with others. The sun too is an excellent model. It shows us how we should give life to others in a totally indiscriminating way. The tree is another shining example, supplying healthy and beneficial oxygen in exchange for harmful carbon dioxide. Just look at how the flowers spread fragrance all around, regardless of whether they are appreciated or not. A flowing stream irrigates fields without expecting anything in return. Without the inculcation of these altruistic values, no meaningful life on earth is possible.

According to the Divine law, you can take from the world whatever will satisfy your need—not your greed. You may do business with others but you may not exploit them.

Positivity prevails throughout Nature. Negativity just does not exist in the natural world. This teaches us the lesson that we should give a positive response at all times, even in negative situations.

Christ has exhorted us to follow Nature's example in these divine words: 'Our Father in Heaven! Hallowed be Your name, Your Kingdom come, Your Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.' (Matthew 6: 10)

The Beautiful World of Nature

The relevance of positive living is not limited to individual moral behavior. It is incumbent on us to follow a positive course at all times and in all situations. For, in this vast universe, there is only our tiny earth on which human beings may survive. To date, there is no other spot in the cosmos where we have discovered life-supporting systems. Preserving Nature, is synonymous with sustaining life, while destroying Nature will lead to total extinction. In short, consistently engaging in positive living amounts to saving life, while failing to do so is a certain

way of committing suicide.

This beautiful world of nature created by God is well on its way to being ruined by man. Widespread violence, ecological disturbance and global warming have together become a menace greater than that of a Third World War. Indeed, it is as if a Third World War has already been thrust upon us. We have to work unitedly and sincerely to save Nature in the interest of all humanity.

The Home of Peace

The religious viewpoint on this subject is very aptly conveyed in the Quran in the following statement:

‘God calls to the Home of Peace.’ (THE QURAN10: 25)

This means that according to the creation plan, peace and harmony should prevail in human society. God Himself is peace. He intended this world to be peaceful, and only a peaceful world will be able to receive His blessings.

A peaceful world is like paradise on earth. It is only in such a world that we can meet and establish contact with God Almighty, the creator of man and the universe.

Nature was a paradise on earth, but man is turning it into hell. Nature, a source of spirituality, is God’s language: it teaches us the lesson of peace and harmony. It is the source of life to all mankind, and destruction of Nature means destruction of mankind. Nature is a fundamental necessity for human beings, both physically as well as spiritually.

Peace requires us to foster a culture of tolerance, for intolerance can lead only to war.

Nature and man are interdependent. We cannot think of human beings without Nature, or conversely, Nature without human beings. We have either to go on together or else perish together. Nature encompasses a huge family of which Man is a dominant member endowed with the unique and powerful gift of intelligence. This puts a responsibility on mankind to use this gift judiciously and ensure that Nature is maintained the way it was intended by God. But Nature is now in peril and once again the responsibility is in the hands of mankind to save it.

Nuclear Arms for What?

Nuclear weapons and other destructive devices are totally against the

divine scheme prevailing in the beautiful world of nature. Why then should there be the stockpiling of nuclear arms, which is the greatest threat not only to peace but also to the very survival of mankind?

Here it should be stressed, that nuclear arms are not usable. Weapons of mass destruction, their widespread devastation and the long lasting effects of radioactive fallout make the use of these weapons impractical. Such weapons can be—and have been—used only once over Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States near the end of World War II. Hiroshima and Nagasaki represented a full stop to this matter—not a comma. Why then are some countries acquiring more and more nuclear bombs? The answer is that they want to maintain their status as nuclear powers.

There is, however, an alternative far superior to the nuclear power status. Destroy all nuclear weapons. Such an action would lead to a peace explosion. Anyone who dared to do so would emerge as a spiritual winner and a moral superpower, unlike the competitors in the nuclear race, where there can be no winner.

*Preserving nature,
is synonymous
with sustaining life,
while destroying
nature will soon
lead to extinction.*

It is a fact that being a moral superpower is on a far higher plane than being a nuclear superpower. But such a revolutionary step cannot be taken bilaterally; it is possible only on a unilateral basis.

Nuclear disarmament is not the mere destruction of nuclear weapons. It is to turn a 'violent' bomb into a 'peace bomb'. It would bring about a peaceful explosion. Any nation that has the courage to take this peace initiative would apparently lose its status as a nuclear power. But at the same time, it would gain a far more elevated status— that of a moral or spiritual superpower. Only such a superpower can initiate the process of peace. Only this peace 'explosion' can transform a violent world into a world where peace reigns supreme.

Peace—A Positive Behaviour

Peace is a product of positive mental attitude and a natural state of society. Violence is the result of negative thinking and an unnatural state. Peace is as much in accordance with nature's plan as violence is against it. If the atmosphere of peace is disturbed, the normal functioning of society is disrupted. This law applies to the entire universe of which man is a member. According to the scheme of nature, peace is the only secret of smooth functioning in human society as well as in the rest of the universe. Peace, therefore, is such a basic requirement of man, that it is crucial to maintain it in all situations. Without peace there can be

neither development nor progress. No excuse whatsoever justifies the use of violence, be it individual, national or international life. Regardless of how unfavourable circumstances might be, an environment of peace is indispensable. We must maintain peace unilaterally, for nothing that we desire can be achieved without it.

Failure to establish peace will result in total destruction. The option facing us is not between peace and no peace, but between peace and annihilation. Without peace, there is no hope for mankind.

Spiritual Comfort

What disturbs the peaceful plan of Nature can be, to a great extent, traced to people's growing materialism. It is this thinking which leads to mindless exploitation of nature, resulting in the disturbance of the peaceful plan of nature. A path of moderation would soon make clear that if earlier they were comfortable physically, now they are comfortable spiritually. And undoubtedly spiritual comfort is far better than material comfort.

God Himself is Peace. He intended this world to be peaceful, and only a peaceful world will be able to receive His blessings.

The perpetrator of violence, be he a 'Hitler' or a common man, invariably suffers from remorse, while the peacemaker derives great satisfaction from a measured response. If one were to think of the end result, one would never indulge in violence. Remember, peace is in consonance with humanity, whereas violence is a descent to the animal level.

Peace—Man's Absolute Right

Peaceful revolution is the outcome of peaceful thinking. Peaceful minds make for a peaceful world. Man was born in peace. Man must die in peace. Peace is man's birth right— God's greatest blessing to humanity. □



Peace with All

A person who is God-fearing and has the sense of accountability will undoubtedly lead a peaceful life and be conscious of not being unkind to others.

FROM PLANET EARTH TO PLANET PARADISE

Future of Mankind

THE British newspaper *The Independent* carried a news report on February 21, 2015 with the heading: *Stephen Hawking: Space travel will save mankind and we should colonise other planets.* During a conversation with an American visitor, Adaeze Uyanwah at London's Science Museum, Stephen Hawking said: "I believe that the long term future of the human race must be space and that it represents an important life insurance for our future survival, as it could prevent the disappearance of humanity by colonising other planets. Human aggression could bring civilisation and humanity to an end and space travel will give us somewhere else to go."

Man has no eternal future on the planet earth. Make yourself deserving candidates for the planet of Paradise.

This statement is nothing but a romantic dream. Scientific advances over the last two decades allow astronomers to detect extrasolar planets (planets orbiting stars outside our solar system) or exoplanets that are similar in size and mass of the earth. However, exoplanets with the right physical and chemical composition and attributes fine-tuned to support advanced life, are non-existent in our universe. Such research continues to prove that our planet Earth was created with a purpose by a supernatural Designer, God.

In this context, it is important to study the theory of life presented in the Quran. According to it the earth has been made as a temporary abode for human beings and it will certainly come to an end after a period of time. Then the other abode for humans would be Paradise. This means that people have no eternal future on the planet earth. If one wants to achieve a successful life, then they should perform such deeds as can make themselves deserving candidates for the planet of Paradise. □

Turn to God

Faith in God enables one to turn to Him for recompense in times of grievance.

A LIFE OF MORAL RESTRAINT

Purify Your Soul

THE month of Ramazan is called the month of patience (*sabr*) (*Mishkat al Masabih*, 1/613). During this month, the believer is trained to control his negative feelings and lead a successful life, while warding off all evils. Negative feelings in man are the greatest obstacle to his progress, and fasting is the solution to this greatest of human problems.

This is explained in the *Hadith*: (words of the Prophet) 'There is *zakat* for everything and the *zakat* of our body is fasting'. (*Mishkat al Masabih*, 1/639) Here *zakat* means purity. There is a way to purify all things, and fasting is the method devised for purifying the body. Fasting acts as a cleanser for the human body. The physical bath using water purifies the external body, while fasting purifies the inner body or the soul.

There is a way of purifying all things, and fasting is the method devised for purifying the soul.

The Prophet once observed: 'When you fast, you should not utter any evil word. And if any one abuses you or wants you to engage in fighting, let it be known that you are fasting'. (*Mishkatul Masabih*, 1/611). The aim of fasting is to purify oneself in action in conformity with one's pure thoughts. One who is fasting thinks that he has to lead a life of restraint. In such a situation, should anything evil be said to him or aggravate him, he will not be provoked. As he is deeply aware that by fasting he has entered into a covenant with God to lead a life of restraint. If so, how can he take part in any evil act?

A life of restraint is the only guarantee of all manner of religious and worldly progress. Man has been sent to this world to be tested. That is why there are all kinds of trials and tribulations by which man may be tested to find out who has passed the test and who has failed.

"Restraint" is an everlasting principle. Fasting is a lesson which teaches a life of restraint. The true fast is kept by those whose fasting helps them to lead a life of restraint thus enabling him to shun all evil ways. □



THEORETICAL BOSSISM, PRACTICAL BOSSISM

Master Yourself

BOSSISM means accepting someone as your master. Sometimes bossism can and does lead to conflict. A common example is at home—both partners say: ‘Why should I accept you as the boss, why should you not accept me as the boss?’ Such disputes create hindrance in normal life and become an obstacle to the intellectual progress of both.

There is a neat solution to this controversy. In theoretical matters, take yourself as your own boss; but in practical matters, as per your convenience, accept the other person as the boss.

In the realm of your thought, you can declare ‘I am the master of myself.’ None can deny this realm. In practical life, cooperation of the other party is a must else life can get very difficult. Man is essentially a social being, and you need others as partners in most of your endeavours. As a matter of practical wisdom you can accept others as your boss.

In theoretical matters, take yourself as your own boss. But, in practical matters according to convenience you should accept the other person as a boss.

Your mind is engaged in thinking at all times. This is a natural phenomenon that is very personal and only you are aware of your thoughts and feelings. But in day to day activities, you need to interact with people in the external world in brief stints. Here you can adopt someone as your temporary boss, while continuing to maintain your self-bossism at the level of thought.

You cannot change society. You have no option and have to adjust with other people. Your intellectual life though is exclusively your own space. The best attitude in this regard will be to ‘give to others what is due to others, and give to yourself what is due to yourself.’ □



A COUNTER-IDEOLOGY IS REQUIRED

Islamization of Individual, Not State

RECENTLY some Muslims perpetrated acts of violence in France and Denmark. As usual, these acts were performed in the name of Islam. After these incidents the US administration organized a three-day conference in Washington during February 17-19, 2015. The theme of the meeting was: Countering Violent Extremism. Sixty nations participated in the conference. A number of Muslim organizations were also among the participants.

Speaking on this occasion President Barack Obama said that Islam as a religion was not responsible for the recent violence. It was rather an external ideology—not based on Islamic teachings—that was behind these acts. Those who commit violence draw inspiration from this external ideology.

The political interpretation of Islam has become an ideology that promotes violence.

What is this ideology? President Obama did not mention this. It is the political interpretation of Islam, devised in the twentieth century. There were two champions of this ideology: Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) in the Arab world and Syed Abul Ala Maududi (1903-1979) in the Indian subcontinent. For various reasons, this ideology spread widely amongst Muslims.

It is important to understand why the political interpretation of Islam foisted an ideology that promoted violence. It made Islam a subject of imposition, whereas earlier Islam was regarded as a subject of adherence or following. If Islam is the subject to be followed, then the goal is to focus on oneself—one must discover God, lead a God-oriented life and try to spiritually elevate oneself. With such a goal, there can be no question of violence. But when Islam is considered a subject of imposition, the goal then becomes the external political system. The aim now is to dethrone the political rulers so that the political system of choice may be imposed on all. Here lies the root of violence.

The political ideology is inherently violent. It is imperative to come up with a counter ideology to eradicate violence—one that is sound and robust. The wrong notion that Islam is a political system must be

dispelled and instead clearly establish it as non-political. The objective of Islam is Islamization of the individual, and not Islamization of the state.

In 1917 the Communist government was formed in Russia and the USSR was established in its wake. This situation was perceived as a threat by the United States of America. America countered the problem not with violence but through a sound counter ideology. Anti-communist literature was published on a wide scale and the entire world was flooded with it. One example of this is mentioned below:

Yugoslavia's Communist politician, Milovan Djilas (1911-1995) wrote a powerful book *New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (1957) criticizing the Communist system. It was introduced in the Reader's Digest under the heading, *Milovan Djilas and the Book that is Shaking the Communist World*. (Eugene Lyon, October 1957)

The political ideology is inherently a violent ideology. Therefore, a counter ideology is required to face this violent ideology.

Given these historic precedents, the need to publish strong and powerful literature against the terrorist ideology is imperative—powerful enough to shake the terrorists at their very roots. So that a commentator may be able to remark: 'This is the book that is shaking the terrorist world.' This is the only solution to rid violence in the name of Islam that plagues the world today. No other solution will work in this regard. □



Happiness

The secret of happiness is in contentment. If you are living in contentment, then you will be happy. But if you are discontent with what you have achieved, then you are bound to live in a perpetual state of unhappiness.

WHY THIS CONTRADICTION?

Freedom of Individual Action

THE world is indeed a strange place. The capacity to dominate others gives joy. Guile and deceit seem to be the accepted norm, while honesty and genuineness are at a discount. Sycophancy is rampant but being candid and outspoken rarely wins respect or popularity.

All this is happening in a world that was created and meant to be beautiful and flawless—where a single tree stands as a stunning beauty, where birds sing tunes of joy and peace, where the sun and the moon freely pour out their light, where no star trespasses into the orbit of another to forcibly plant its own flag!

Observing this contradiction between man and the rest of the cosmos, some people claim that there are two gods: one, the god of light, and the other, the god of darkness. Yet others argue that there is no god at all. If there were truly a god, they maintain, why such lawlessness in the human world?

The reality is that this world is a testing-ground where we are being constantly examined.

But the reality is that this world is a testing-ground, where we are being constantly examined. The ideal world will come after this one—after death. The whole of creation other than man is a preliminary glimpse, as it were, to that ideal world. Just as the rest of creation fully obeys God, human beings will do the same in the world to come. Right now, they enjoy God-given free will, to do as they please. The test is about the choice they make, using their freedom.

Man had to be given full freedom of action if he was to be tested. As a result, some choose to walk on the straight path, while others may opt for the crooked one. After the Day of Judgment, only those who provide evidence of having led a life of thinking and acting in the ideal way will be admitted into Heaven. The rest will be gathered together and dumped into Hell, just as rubbish is collected together and thrown away. □



A TRAINING COURSE IN THANKSGIVING AND PIETY

A Life of Fasting

THE commands of fasting are given in Chapter 2 of the Quran. These verses are as follows:

“Believers, fasting has been prescribed for you, just as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard yourselves against evil. Fast for a specified number of days, but if any one among you is ill or on a journey, let him fast the same number of days later. For those who can fast only with extreme difficulty, there is a way to compensate—the feeding of a needy person. But he who does good of his own accord shall be well rewarded; but to fast is better for you, if you only knew”.

“The month of Ramadan is the month when the Quran was sent down as guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and the criterion by which to distinguish right from wrong. Therefore, whoever of you is present in that month, let him fast; but he who is ill or on a journey shall fast a similar number of days later on. God desires ease for you, not hardship. He desires you to fast the whole month, so that you may glorify Him for His having guided you and so that you may be grateful to Him”. (THE QURAN 2: 183 – 185)

Fasting is training with a dual purpose. One is thanksgiving, the other *Taqwa* (righteousness or piety).

Food and drink are two great blessings of God that are not well appreciated under normal conditions. Fasting the whole day, a person experiences great hunger and thirst. After sunset, as he eats and drinks, he truly appreciates how great these blessings of God are. Overwhelmed with this experience, he expresses his gratitude to God from the innermost recesses of his heart.

Fasting is also a training in *taqwa* or righteousness; that is, man should abstain from all things forbidden by God in this life. During Ramazan eating only at night and abstaining during the day is an exercise in making God one’s supervisor. This temporary abstinence trains him to withdraw for the rest of his life from things God disapproves. The whole life of the believer is a life of fasting. □

GOD AND MAN

Discover Your Creator

MAN has never fully understood himself, let alone trying to understand the Almighty. He visualises God in his image and vice versa. Human history is the story of this mistake and its consequences.

To think of God to be like man is to try to bring God to the human level. All forms of theism and polytheism are a product of this mistake. Both are different names for making assumptions about God based on wrong analogies between man and God.

We come into this world through biological parents. It was assumed that God, too, must have parents, that there must have been someone before God, who brought God into being. Man denied His existence because the eternal God is not physically visible. Observing himself, reflecting on the fact that he himself is a creation, should have led man to acknowledge the existence of the Creator. But given this analogy that man drew between humans and God, he was not ready to accept Him.

To think of God to be like man is to try to bring God to the human level.

Those who accepted God have also erred. To get things done, it is common practice to carry recommendation from people with access to power and authority. Accordingly, they assumed that God too, had some special people, who were very close to Him, who had great influence in His court and whose recommendation God accepted.

Human beings are swayed by emotions. Decisions taken in an emotional state ignore facts and tend to be flawed. People believed that God had a special link with members of a special group or community, and that His relations with them were altogether different from His relations with the rest of humanity.

All such beliefs are a negation of God's divinity. But people often cling to such baseless thoughts and imaginary beliefs.

To consider oneself to be like God is to imagine that one is the master of one's destiny, and completely free to do or to abstain from whatever one wants to. It leads to devising the principles of life as per wishes and

to determine what is permissible and what is forbidden through one's own reasoning.

Success affects people in many ways, at times to the extent that they believe they have God-like powers. This is tantamount to putting oneself in God's place, attributing to oneself a right that is actually God's alone. Man is a creation of God and how can the creation be equated with the Supreme Creator?

The universe mirrors God's attributes through His innumerable creatures. There is ample evidence of the existence, power and greatness of the Creator who brought this realm into being. If your sensitivity is alive, you can find God all around you, you can see God everywhere. This is living proof of God.

Observing himself and reflecting on the fact that he himself is a created being, should have led man to acknowledge the existence of the Creator.

The various forms and activities of living beings are a clear announcement that the Creator of this universe is a living, and not a lifeless Being. When the sun appears in the morning and things that have been covered by the darkness of night become visible once again; when a river rushes forth, tumbling down from the mountains, it loudly declares that the Creator of this universe is a living, active Being. When a tiger pounces on and grabs its prey and brings it under its control, it announces, as it were, that its Creator is a Being who has everything under His control. The astounding expansiveness of space tells us that the Creator is an unlimited Being.

While this is sure to bring faith in Him, it raises questions that are not easy to answer. If God is, then why does He not directly reveal Himself? Why do evil and suffering exist? Evil and oppression are rampant. People are always at each other's throats. Why doesn't God stand up for the oppressed?

The answers to these questions can be understood only when You understand God's creation plan, the scheme that the Creator has devised for His creatures. This world is temporary and life here is short-lived. We are here to be tested. This world is a field where different plants have been given the chance to grow and turn into fine trees or ugly weeds. The fine trees will be presented with several fine opportunities to flourish, while the weeds will be uprooted. □

TWO WAYS OF ADDRESSING OTHERS

Minds and Emotions

THERE are two distinct ways of addressing people—One is to address their minds and introduce new thought process; the other is to deliver what people might consider to be ‘fine’ speeches, but which cause no positive transformation.

Those who seek to address people’s minds and enable them to start thinking on positive lines often do not gather a large following. Generally, they do not win public acclaim. But, at the same time, serious-minded seekers of Truth find food for thought and inspiration in the wisdom of such people. Their enlightenment awakens them from their slumber setting their thinking processes working in a different direction. It provokes them to re-think matters and change their attitudes and opinions. Until then, if their lives had been self-centred; they now, begin to live for the Truth. It helps them develop a new mentality. It leads them to introspect. They speak less and think more. They now give more attention to reforming themselves than to criticizing others.

Those who seek to address people’s minds and enable them to start thinking on positive lines often do not gather a large following.

For people who address others simply to make a ‘good’ impression and win popularity, the matter is totally different. They seek to gather followers, and so they appeal to people’s whims, fancies, fears, prejudices and negative emotions often by cleverly misrepresenting facts to win the adulation of their unthinking fans. Underneath their apparent popularity lies a deep emptiness. Their rabble-rousing rhetoric may continue for years, but it will not help transform even a single individual.□



Humility

Humble is one who is modest in his estimation of himself, and acknowledges the goodness of others.

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



NEWS OF PROMOTION

A young man told me that he had recently been promoted. “Now I will get a higher salary, a bigger house and I will be given a bigger car. Earlier, I had a railway pass to travel, but now I can travel by air!”

Listening to him, I thought that this is precisely what is going to happen in the Hereafter. Heaven too, can be expressed in worldly terms in this way. Entry into heaven also is a promotion. People whose record in this imperfect world is found to be good will be promoted and allowed to enter into the perfect world of heaven.

Promotion to heaven however, requires that we lead our lives with great awareness, gauge our every action to ensure our entry into heaven. An aware mind has its own security guard. You will carefully watch your every action—thought, word, behaviour and deed. One who bears this thought in mind epitomizes the words of Umar Faruq “Weigh up your actions before they are weighed.”

Inviting people to God is like giving them prospective news of their own promotion.

Inviting people to God is like giving them prospective news of their own promotion. This news is a billion times greater than a job promotion. Such a person cannot keep news of the Truth to himself since it makes him invite others to the Truth. Claiming to have found the Truth and not inviting others to it, is evidence of the fact that he has actually not found it. □



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FASTING FOR THE GREATEST REWARD

Divine Mission

THE Chapter al-Baqarah of the Quran has five verses that deal with fasting during the month of Ramazan. (THE QURAN 2: 183-187) The book of *Hadith Mishkat al-Masabih*, quotes seventy-three sayings of the Prophet on fasting. Detailed provisions regarding Ramazan are given in the books of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence).

The Quran says: 'The month of Ramazan is the month when the Quran was sent down as guidance to mankind with clear proofs of guidance and the criterion by which to distinguish right from wrong. Therefore, whoever of you is present in that month, let him fast.' (THE QURAN 2: 185)

In a *Hadith* (words of prophet) the Prophet of Islam has said: "Every deed in Islam is rewarded from ten to seven hundred times. But God says, 'Fasting is for ME, and I will give unlimited reward to one who fasts.' This unequivocally states the importance of fasting.

***A person who
fasts prepares
himself for the
mission of God.***

The question is: what is the importance of fasting such that one who fasts shall be given unlimited rewards? The above *Hadith* gives the reason. It says that one who fasts gives up food and water for the sake of God.

The words "for the sake of God" are very clear. It means that a person who fasts prepares himself for the mission of God. Given this high purpose, he will win the highest reward.

In the month of Ramazan it is required that every believer must study the Quran to discover its message and adopt the spreading of this message as his mission. The month of Ramazan—is meant for preparation and the remaining eleven months are for spreading the message of the Quran to all mankind.

Spreading the Quranic message is a divine mission and signifies providing support to God. The Prophet of Islam informed his followers that fasting is preparing oneself for the sake of the divine mission.

This is the greatest mission, so one who devotes himself is liable for the greatest reward.

Fasting means staying away from all distraction. In fact, the month of Ramazan is the month of *etikaf* (going into seclusion). Minimum *etikaf* is for ten days and maximum *etikaf* is for one month. Ramazan thus frees one from all other activities and stay totally engaged in the study of the Quran. In this sense, the month of Ramazan is the month of discovery of the Quran.

The one who observes fasting, prepares and dedicates himself to this *divine* mission, is promised an unlimited reward. □

In the month of Ramazan it is required that every believer must study the Quran to discover its message and adopt the spreading of this message as his mission.



Choose a High Target

The mind is like a great water reservoir. Opening its gate depends on one's target. If one's target is ordinary then the mind will open the door of energy on a lesser scale.

But, if the target is a high one, the mind will open the gate of energy on a higher scale.

State of Mind

Happiness and unhappiness are both states of the mind. Unhappiness is the result of negative thinking, and happiness is the result of positive thinking.

AN AUTHENTIC BOOK OF REFERENCE ON METAPHYSICS

Life and Death Explained

IT was a beautiful morning in New Delhi. A confident young man from a good and well to do family happily set out on his scooter. He drove his vehicle in a rash manner as if the whole road belonged to him. Suddenly, he was confronted with a car coming from the opposite direction. It was time for crisis management, but the boy failed to manage the situation. The scooter hit the car head on, and he died on the spot.

Every day such deaths take place; some die on the road, some die in hospitals. Man walks on the road as if he were king of the world, But within a short period he dies as if he were nothing. It is the greatest question of mankind that when man is born with high hopes, why should he die such a miserable death. This fate is destined for everyone how are we to explain this phenomenon?

*It is the greatest
question of mankind
that when everyone
is born with high
hopes, why do
they die such a
miserable death.*

Objective sciences cannot provide an answer. Only metaphysics can provide a satisfactory answer. The Quran is an authentic version of metaphysical knowledge. The Quran is a revealed book and has also been preserved in its original form.

The Quran offers a very beautiful picture of human life. Man was born as an eternal being, the planet earth is his temporary abode. The planet earth is not created as the habitat for man. This world was created as a one of a pair. The present world is a temporary world and the other, an eternal world called Paradise is man's true abode. When man dies, he goes to his eternal home.

Any man or woman, who wants to find entry into this eternal home, will have to develop those qualities which are required for entry to the society of this abode. Anyone in serious quest for knowledge about human existence must study the Quran which answer all his questions.□



ISLAM AND THE MODERN MAN - PART II

Nourishment for the Soul

THE problems that confront man in the present age can all be traced, directly or indirectly, to one underlying cause: the separation of man from God. In this modern age man has acquired many material comforts, but he has lost his faith in God. Material progress has provided man with plenty of physical nourishment, but it has left his soul to starve. The soul is essential to the life of the body. If it is separated from the body entirely, then the body dies; and if it is deprived of spiritual nourishment, then it starves in the same way as the body does. It is this spiritual nourishment, which the Quran describes as 'better and more lasting' (THE QURAN 20: 131). And this is what the Prophet Jesus was referring to when he said, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God' (Matthew, 4: 4).

Some people, compelled by an inner longing for God, attach themselves to false gods, but true spiritual fulfilment can be achieved only through the discovery of the true God.

The greatest asset that Islam has to offer man today is this belief in God. All religions originally preached the true concept of God, but as time passed, none of them were able to preserve the concept of God in its original form. Some groups turned God into a national fetish. Others took to worshipping a variety of objects in the name of God. In some religions the concept of God was turned into an abstract philosophy. Thus no religion remained capable of offering a true picture of God. Only, Islam has preserved the true concept of God in a pure and complete form. It is in Islam that modern man will find the God he so desperately needs (THE QURAN 3: 85).

The Concept of God in Different Religions

Man's feeling of helplessness cannot be soothed unless he has a God to whom he can turn. Every religion provides man with some God, but with the exception of Islam, every religion has been corrupted by interpolation and alteration. No religion, except Islam, has preserved a true image of God. They all present an unrealistic picture of the Almighty, which cannot fully satisfy man.

Cat Stevens was an internationally renowned pop musician. He was brought up as a Christian, but in 1976 he accepted Islam and is now known as Yusuf Islam. Speaking of his conversion to Islam, he said: "The Christian Church taught us to believe in God, but the only way to communicate with God was through Jesus—you have no direct contact." To him, "the importance of Islam lies in the fact that it acquaints one with a God who speaks directly to the man and his soul." (*Arabia, London, July 1983*)

Man's nature demands a God whom he can contact directly, but existing religions offer him a God who can be contacted only through some intermediary. Islam is the only religion in which man establishes direct contact with his Lord. This is because Islam is preserved in its original, revealed form, whereas other religions, having been altered and corrupted by man, are not to be found in their pristine form.

All religions were essentially one and the same at the time of their origin. But now these differ from one another due to human interpolation. (THE QURAN 10: 19) Now, some religions have many gods to offer, but this is clearly not what man is looking for. Man is looking for a single being on whom he can focus all his feelings. There can be only one such focal point, not several. Some religions present God in the form of man. But man is looking for a God who is superior to him; he cannot worship a God who is human like himself. Some religions think of God as no more than a vague spirit. But man is seeking a God who sees and hears and speaks; abstract things cannot meet his demands.

Man is looking for a God who is superior to him; he cannot worship a God who is human like himself.

Arthur Koestler was a renowned thinker and writer, and had an estate valued at approximately £ 400,000. He married three times, but even so he was childless. He suffered from Parkinson's disease and leukaemia. In utter despair he took his own life at his London residence in March 1983. He was 77 years old at the time of his death.

Hundreds of such sad events take place everyday all over the world. They happen because people lose hope in this world. There are very few cases in history of true believers in God committing suicide. The reason is that belief in God gives a person hope for his future in the next world. In God's scheme of things, life is not limited to this world alone; it continues after death as well. When believers are afflicted in

this world, they look forward to happiness in the next world. When they despair of the human world, they fix their hopes on the world of God. Thus the distress of a true believer is changed into healthy optimism.

A Distorted Picture of God

The distorted picture of God which is found in other religions cannot fulfil man's inner yearning. The reason is that man requires a perfect God and these religions provide him with imperfect ones. Some people, compelled by an inner longing for God, attach themselves to false gods, but true spiritual fulfilment can be achieved only through the discovery of the true God. A person who is looking for a car that he can travel in will never be satisfied with a toy car. His needs will only be met if he is provided with a real one. Thus man's heart can be set at rest only when it is filled with thoughts of the true God. In the words of the Quran, 'In the remembrance of God all hearts are comforted.' (THE QURAN 13: 28)

Though we cannot behold the Creator in this world, the vast and magnificent universe that He has created is spread out before our eyes. We can see it and experience it. The human mind can be satisfied only with a God who is worthy of the present universe; a God who is great enough to be the creator of the magnificent universe that meets our eyes. A God who does not come up to these standards can hold no attraction for man.

An American scientist, Walter Oscar Lundberg, has explained this very clearly. He writes that a scientist has a special advantage over others in that he is able to understand God's truth. The basic principles on which he works are in fact an expression of God's existence. If this is the case, then why is it that so many scientists deny the very existence of God? This American scientist is of the opinion that one of the reasons is as follows:

'In organized Christianity there is instilled deeply in young people a concept of God created in the image of man rather than of man created in the image of God. When such minds are later trained in science, this reversed and limited anthropomorphic concept gradually becomes more and more incompatible with the rational, inductive attitude of science. Ultimately, when all attempts at reconciliation fail, the concept of God may be abandoned entirely.' (*The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe*, p. 56)

Islam is not a new religion. Originally other religions and Islam were one and the same. But other religions underwent changes and failed to preserve an accurate image of God, whereas in Islam the concept of God has been preserved ideally: it is a picture of God in His most perfect form. The God of Islam is one God; He is Omnipotent; He always was and always will be; He has no partner; He alone has created the universe and He alone sustains it; He sees, hears and speaks; He is always near to answer the supplication of His servant; at no time or place is He parted from man; He helps man through every difficulty of this world and the next. The Quran introduces us to this perfect God. Whoever wishes to know God, can do so through the Quran.

Society

All the nations in present times, be they developed or underdeveloped, are faced with social problems. Human society everywhere is marked by tyranny and injustice, and people are faced with the question of how to reorganize society in order to establish a better human existence.

In the study of the human predicament, what strikes us time and again is that man is still confronted with the necessity to solve his problems in a world where all other creations of God have had their problems definitively solved. This goes to prove that man has gone astray in the thoroughfare of the universe. If he had followed the same thoroughfare as the rest of God's creation, his problems too would have been solved in like manner.

All the things in existence in the universe are governed by the same universal law. Man wants to adopt a separate path for himself. All the things of the universe survive by being beneficial to others, whereas man wants to build his future on the exploitation of others. The tall objects in the universe cast their shadow on the ground in acknowledgement of their modesty, while any form of greatness achieved by man makes him arrogant. Everything in the universe is busy in its own tasks, and does not interfere in others' spheres, while man clashes with others, attempting to construct himself out of the destruction of others. In the universe, floods occur which if given their freedom would wreak havoc, but the system of the universe diverts their course to the rivers and the seas. On the contrary, when man experiences such tempests in the form of negative feelings, he does not divert them to a positive course. Man wants others to suffer on his behalf.

If the ills of society are to be remedied, this contradiction should be put to an end. Human society should be made to follow the same universal system that is strictly adhered to by the universe. The day this happens, all the problems of human life will be solved. With the observance of God's law in the universe there is harmony in nature, why should the observance of that same law by man not succeed in solving human problems?

Social Problems

What is society? It is in actual fact another name of a group of individuals. The behaviour of society is an aggregate of the behaviour of its individuals. If individuals are good, society likewise will be good. If individuals are not good, society will reflect their shortcomings.

The concept of God gives each member of society the most morally correct viewpoint. Its perception engenders in each individual such seriousness as enable him or her to do what is beneficial for the whole of mankind, and to refrain from acting to its disadvantage.

Belief in God is the greatest of discoveries. It galvanizes one's entire personality. This can be illustrated by the example of the game of carrom-board, which is played with 19 pieces arranged at the middle of a square board with holes at each corner. If a player can hit these pieces with a striker in such a way that they are all thrown into all the four holes at one stroke, he is said to have played a Master Stroke. Belief in God too is a kind of master stroke.

Belief in God affects a man's whole being, bringing into play all of his forces. The conviction that man's whole existence is in the grip of God has a complete influence on all of the individual's thoughts, words and deeds. The true believer will never deviate from the straight path of nature.

Paying attention to the body alone, while abandoning the soul, does not produce an integrated personality. The consciousness of this inadequacy keeps the individual constantly dissatisfied, with the feeling that he has failed to find something that he really wanted.

*Belief in the life
Hereafter is the
greatest gift to
human society.
It enables man to
turn to God to seek
compensation for
the wrong done
to him.*

It is this feeling of deprivation which in most cases is the cause of social evils. All tyranny and injustice in society are traceable to this discontent of some being vented on others. People continue to exploit others in order to satisfy their unfulfilled wishes. But, when belief in God takes root in the mind, it turns the man into a complex-free soul, (called a peaceful or serene soul in the Quran) no longer suffering from an inferiority complex about having fewer worldly things than others or from a superiority complex at being granted more. Under all circumstances, with his new, well-integrated personality, he remains a moderate person and that is what makes a man a better member of society.

Paying attention to the body alone, while abandoning the soul, cannot produce an integrated personality.

A new element in his mental make-up is the feeling of responsibility. This feeling is always produced when he is aware of a power above him, which can take him to task. Over and above God, there is no such superior power as will induce a sense of accountability on man, forcing him to abide by the truth.

Belief in Almighty God produces an awareness in man that he is answerable to Him, which in turn makes him extremely cautious in his words and deeds. The possession of the new awareness is like having a guardian angel, which organizes his whole life. It turns him away from the perpetration of tyranny and expectation, and forces him to stick to the path of goodness and justice. The well-known English judge, Sir Matthew Hale, (1609-1676) had very aptly observed: "To say that religion is a cheat is to dissolve all those obligations whereby civil societies are preserved." (Quoted by *Julian Huxley, in Religion Without Revelation*, p. 155)

Religion Without Revelation

When the majority of the members of a society come to accept the Islamic concept of God in their lives, a tremendous change takes place in social matters. This awareness that God is watching puts an end to double standards and the hypocritical stance. Believers do not exploit others as they know that they will have to account for their deeds in God's court. Their lives, instead of remaining self-oriented, become God-oriented. To believe in God is to believe in an Almighty being who has access to the innermost recesses of the human mind, and who will take an account of all acts done openly or covertly. In this way belief in

God takes away a person's ego and haughtiness. The believer is totally sincere and is a realist in the true sense. This is the secret of all kinds of reform. If a man is sincere and realistic, he will perform all tasks in the most proper way, but if he lacks these qualities, he will mar everything that he undertakes. The Islamic concept of God produces this sincerity and realism in man.

All human beings in our world are not equal. Here some are weak, others strong; this difference is the cause of all the injustice prevalent in the world. Those who feel powerful tend to exploit those who appear weaker than themselves.

Belief in God roots out this evil from man. Belief in God tells man that the actual issue is not between man and man, but between God and man. Here, on the one hand is God, the all-powerful, and, on the other is man who has no power as compared to God. It is as if the division here is not between the less powerful and the more powerful, but between power and powerlessness.
(THE QURAN 35: 15)

To believe in God is to believe in an Almighty being who has access to the innermost recesses of the human mind, and who will take an account of all acts done openly or covertly.

Belief in God transforms man's thinking. He begins to look at things not in relation to human beings but in relation to God. This is because he knows he has to face his Maker. Ultimately this causes the disappearance of a tyrannical mentality that had artificially surfaced as a result of seeing everything, not in relation to God but in relation to man. The believer thus comes down to his actual level. He becomes a man cut to size.

In a controversy arising between two persons or two nations, both in most cases, are at fault. In such a state of affairs, if one party admits its mistakes the other party too follows suit. On the contrary if one party remains adamant, the other party becomes equally unwilling to admit its own faults. This leads to an escalation of the strife, until it reaches a point of no return.

In all such cases, the actual problem is that no sooner does a quarrel start both the groups turn it into an issue of prestige. Each group knows that it shares the blame, yet it refrains from saying so, for any such outright admission would be humiliating in the extreme.

Yet if one of them were to take the initiative in admitting its mistakes, the state of affairs would change drastically. That prestige issue would now turn into an issue of balance. Now, with the admission of a mistake by one group, the other group, in admitting its errors would not be eating humble pie but simply following what the other group has already done. That is to say, such an admission by one of the group could induce its rival to adopt a balanced approach.

Such realism, the mainspring of a reformed life, is attainable only through sincere worship of God, self-effacement before His greatness and avowal of one's own insignificance and lack of perfection. This realism is the mark of the true believer—one who believes in God when God in fact is not visible before us—how could a person of such faith and practice deign to indulge in matters of worldly prestige?

The system of nature follows the principle of balance. One of the strategies resorted to by nature to maintain this balance is diversion, or the redistribution of excessive amounts of force or energy. For instance, if all the water that comes down to earth in the form of rain were stored in the fields and settlements, an immeasurable strain would be placed on the environment. What nature does in this case is divert all the spare accumulated water to the rivers and seas.

The feeling of responsibility is always produced when man is aware of a power above him, which can take him to task.

It is this principle of diversion, which has been followed in the building of dams. Designed mainly for storage purposes, dams have a regulatory role in the environment, controlling floodwaters and diverting them to useful ends such as irrigation and the production of electricity. The same principle is followed in machines, like the steam engine. When the quantity of steam exceeds the required amount and too much pressure builds up, the steam is in a sense diverted by being allowed to escape through a safety valve.

In social life, there is a somewhat similar build-up of stresses and strains. When a number of people live together, it is but natural for complaints and grudges to surface between them. If these negative sentiments are allowed to escalate, discord and enmity are bound to develop. When that stage is reached, it becomes almost impossible to reform a human group or society.

In such a state of affairs these harmful feelings may be diverted. Belief in God and the Life hereafter serves this very purpose in life. It diverts those feelings—which are harmful to society—towards God.

In the early history of Israelites, there is the story of Joseph, who was separated from his father by his stepbrothers. Later, the same happened with Benjamin another brother of Joseph. He too, without his father's knowledge, was separated from him. These were terrible losses for Jacob the father, and it was but natural that he became intensely miserable. Had he vented his negative feelings on his elder sons, there would have been great dissension and discord in his family. Instead, he diverted all his flood of feelings towards God saying: 'I express my grief and sorrow to God.'

***Man's feeling
of helplessness
cannot be soothed
unless he has a
God to whom he
can turn.***

There was a similar diversion of negative feeling when Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab dismissed the Islamic General Khalid ibn al-Walid from his post of the Commander of the army to the position of an ordinary soldier. It was a rude shock to Khalid, but he redirected his hurt feelings to God, saying: 'I fight not for the cause of Umar, but for the cause of God.'

Belief in the life Hereafter is the greatest gift to human beings. It enables man to turn to God and seek compensation for the wrong done to him. Whatever he has failed to find in man he can expect to find in God. In this way the negative feelings of a worshipper of God keep getting diverted to God instead of to man. In other words the superabundance of water that would have caused great harm in the form of a flood is canalized into a diversion pool. This can be concluded with an observation made by George Bernard Shaw: "If a man like Muhammad were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would solve its problems in a way that would bring it much-needed peace and happiness."

The life of the Prophet Muhammad was a perfect example of what a true believer's life should be. We need to go further than Bernard Shaw and say that "If true believers were born in this world, peace would certainly prevail—which should be our first priority." □

This is the concluding part of the article 'Islam and the Modern Man'. Part I of this article appeared in the May 2015 issue of Spirit of Islam.

CLARITY OF EXPRESSION

Objective Thinking

YOU need to be clear in your expression both written and spoken. The person who hears or reads what you have written should clearly understand and not be confused.

Nature has bestowed material things in separate shapes and forms. In the natural or physical sciences, material or physical objects are automatically separated and sorted out. It is different in the case of humanities since they deal with concepts and ideas which need sorting. Humanities include religion, spirituality and the social sciences. Categorization and distinctions between ideas require reflection and deep thought.

The physical sciences demand clarity and precision. In humanities, people can look at the same human-related issue in different ways, and this can lead to much confusion. This is true in the case of both secular and religious issues. In the physical sciences, things are sorted out, separated and delineated by nature itself, while in the humanities, people with different opinions and world views see things in very different and often contradictory, ways. Such easy and automatic categorization does not happen.

In the humanities, categorization and distinctions between ideas require reflection and deep thought.

Milk contains a huge amount of bacteria which are not visible to the naked eye. They can be seen if you examine just a drop of milk under a microscope. Similarly, our galaxy, the Milky Way, appears to our naked eye as a white stream. But if you view it through a telescope, you will notice that it consists of a vast number of stars, which, because of their enormous distance from us, appear like one large white stream.

In contrast to material objects—like the bacteria in milk and the stars in the Milky Way—ideas do not exist separately. They exist in our minds mixed up along with other ideas. Our minds are a maze of different ideas that are often jumbled up. So, when you speak or write on any subject, you should be capable of sorting out the different ideas that coexist in your mind and clearly presenting the particular idea that you wish to convey. This does not happen naturally. You have to do it yourself, using the power of analysis. If you lack this power, your words will only confuse people, for want of clarity.

Consider this: Islam is taught as a subject in madrasas as well as in universities. But there is a clear distinction between the two in this regard. In madrasas, Islam is taught in terms of belief. In contrast, in universities the Islamic Studies curriculum is taught as a historical phenomenon. If you don't understand this difference between madrasa education and university education and you talk or speak on this subject, you are bound to create confusion.

We should develop sufficient power of analysis to sort out matters in our minds, and our minds should be so awakened that we can immediately recognize the distinctions between things.

Consider another example—the question of the freedom of expression. There is a crucial difference between the Western and Asian approach. A person adopting the general Western approach and discussing a contentious Islamic issue, while exercising freedom of expression, might be interpreted by an Asian as 'anti-Islamic'. This way, causing much chagrin.

When we talk of issues related to different conceptions about mankind and life, how do we make sure that we do not create confusion?

The answer is to emulate nature - develop analytical powers to sort out matters in our minds, and learn to recognize the difference between various concepts and ideas.

For this, we need 'objective thinking'. One has to be free from prejudice, keep away from distractions, rise above situations, and become a fully 'de-conditioned' person. Such a person will be completely realistic. For him, the truth alone is of importance. Nothing else matters.

Such qualities are more likely to be found in 'secular' people, but not in a complete sense. These attributes can be found only in a God-conscious person, someone whom the fear of God has completely cut down to size.

It is not enough to have knowledge in order to speak and write with clarity, God-consciousness is indispensable. Without this, the clarity of your expression will be limited. It is when knowledge and God-consciousness combine in a person that his expression truly gains clarity. □



EQUALITY

First Established by Islam

ISLAM emerged in the 7th century CE. Prior to this, human equality was nowhere present in any form. To back any action you need ideological support and prior to Islam there was none. In pre-Islamic times, human inequality was thought of as being as natural. In such a context, it was hardly possible to make acceptable the principle of human equality.

Some parts of the world people believed in the concept of rebirth. The belief was that differences between people are because of their deeds in previous lives. Any change in this is possible only after death, in the next life. In such a situation, it was impossible to establish social equality.

Similar was the belief in the superiority of one race or ethnic group over another especially based on skin color - another major stumbling block in establishing human equality.

Earlier, monarchy prevailed over large parts of the world. Kings promoted the notion that human beings were divided into two classes, rulers and the ruled, masters and subjects. This underlying belief was reinforced by social hierarchies and inequalities for thousands of years. Rulers found this immensely useful for themselves, and made every effort to propagate and enforce it.

Islam for the first time, uprooted this thinking based on human inequality, and presented an ideology that could bring about human equality.

Islam for the first time, uprooted this thinking based on human inequality, and presented an ideology that could bring about human equality. It stressed that the distinction was between God and man, and that there was no distinctions between human beings. Every human being, it taught, was a servant of God. The social revolution that Islam introduced in Arabia gradually spread through large parts of the world bringing with it an age of equality. □



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 A.D. It is a book that brings glad tidings to mankind, 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**

Have you not seen how your Lord lengthens the shadows? Had He pleased, He could have made them constant; then We placed the sun as an indicator for them, then We withdrew it to Us, a gradual withdrawal. It is He who made the night a mantle for you, and sleep for repose; and made the day a time for rising. It is He who sends the winds as heralds of His mercy and We send down pure water from the sky, so that We may bring life to a dead land; and slake the thirst of Our creation; cattle and men, in great numbers.

(THE QURAN 25: 45-49)

The phenomenon which in the present age is known as the axial rotation of the earth has been set down here in layman's language. The earth rotates on its axis once in twenty-four hours, due to which day and night follow upon each other. This is a wonderful miracle of Almighty God's power. Had there been no axial rotation of the earth, half of it would have been continuously under the blazing sun, while the other half would have been continuously enveloped by night. Thus it would have been extremely difficult to live on the earth.

There are many lessons in this system of the earth. Just as the light of day necessarily follows the darkness of night; in the same way untruth will be followed by Truth. Similarly, waking up in the morning after sleeping at night is symbolic of resurrection in the life after death.

Likewise, there is a lesson hidden in the system of the rains. Just as the dead earth is revived thanks to the rains, so also does God's guidance instil faith and fear of God in a heart which otherwise would have become as lifeless as an arid land.

We have explained it to them in diverse ways, so that they may take heed, but most persist in their ingratitude. If We had so wished, We might have sent a warner into every town, so do not yield to those who deny the truth, but strive with the utmost strenuousness by means of this [Quran, to convey its message to them]. (THE QURAN 25: 50-52)

In the Quran, the topics of the unity of God and the Hereafter have been described again and again in a number of different ways. If a man is serious, these discourses are enough to arouse his interest. But one who is unheeding is not influenced by any argument.

Undertaking the great *jihad* by means of the Quran means a peaceful struggle to spread the word of God. That is to say, peaceful struggle is the real *jihad*—nay, the greatest *jihad*. Even if opponents try to divert the attention of the believers from the realm of peaceful efforts, it should then be the endeavour of the believers to concentrate upon the field of preaching based on the teachings of the Quran. However, if, due to the distraction caused by opponents, the field of action appears to be changing at any time, then all possible efforts should be made to bring it back to the field of peaceful activity aimed at conveying the message of the Quran.

It is He who released the two bodies of flowing water, one sweet and fresh and the other salty and bitter, and set up an insurmountable barrier between them.^a It is He who has created human beings from water and He has granted them the ties of blood as well as marriage.^b Your Lord is all powerful. (THE QURAN 25: 53-54)

a) When two rivers meet or a river flows down into the sea, at the point of confluence, in spite of coming together, the two waters remain separate and a line of demarcation can be seen for quite a distance. The writer of these words has witnessed this scene at the meeting place of the rivers Ganges and Yamuna at Allahabad. This happens under the natural law which in the present age is known as 'surface tension'. Similarly, at the sea coast when the tides are rising the salt sea water rides over the coastal river's fresh water. But the surface tension keeps the two waters separate, and when the tide goes out, the saltish water withdraws from above (without affecting the water below), and the fresh water below maintains its natural character. Due to this surface tension law, it has been possible to find reservoirs of fresh water in the very midst of salt sea waters to meet the needs of voyagers.

b) The main constituent of the human body is water. That wonderful creation, called the human being, came into existence with water. Then by the natural process of procreation, generation followed upon generation. If we identify and study similar events which take place on the earth, we will find symbols of God's power hidden in them.

Yet they worship besides God that which can neither benefit them nor harm them. One who denies the truth is a helper [of evil] against his Lord. We have sent you only as a bearer of glad tidings and as a warner. Say, 'I do not ask you for any recompense for this except that anyone who so wishes should take the right path to his Lord.' (THE QURAN 25: 55-57)

God has placed man in a world in which everything and indeed the entire atmosphere bear testimony to the unity of God. But man does not avail of the light of guidance from it. He goes so far astray that he builds the system of his life on the basis of polytheism instead of the unity of God. If a servant of God takes up the task of proclaiming the unity of God, he meets with dire opposition.

However, the preacher of Truth is not allowed to go to the extent of indulging in violence. He has to pursue his mission keeping himself within the sphere of advice and admonition or persuasion. If his call is not being effective, it is not his duty to add violence to his preaching. The only additions he can make consist of praying to God, ending all material or worldly quarrels unilaterally and influencing people's hearts by selflessness and good behaviour.

Put your trust in the One who is Ever-living (God), who never dies, and glorify-Him with His praise. He is fully aware of the sins of His servants; it is He who created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six Days (periods), then settled Himself on the throne-the Gracious One. Ask any informed person about Him. When they are told, 'Prostrate yourselves before the Gracious One, they ask, 'Who is this Gracious One? Shall we prostrate ourselves before whatever you will?' This increases their aversion. (THE QURAN 25: 58-60)

Here 'six Days' means six Days of God. In the language of human beings, it may be called six stages or six periods. The Creation of the Universe in six stages indicates that it was done in a well planned manner. Whatever is brought into existence on the basis of a plan and a specific arrangement cannot be futile.

In the question the stress is on the subject matter and not on the person to whom the question is put. The idea is that if a man is acquainted with God's wonderful marvels, he will be able to tell you how High and Mighty is the Merciful God. The research undertaken by scientists in modern times partially fits the meaning of this verse. If a man learns the secrets of the universe which have come to light as a result of scientific research, he will become extremely excited, his hair will stand on end and his heart will spontaneously bow down before the Might of the Creator.

Exalted is He who put constellations in the heavens, a radiant lamp and an illuminating moon- it is He who has made night and day succeed each other, a sign for those who would take heed and would be grateful. (THE QURAN 25: 61-62)

This passage possibly refers to what is known as the solar system. The original Arabic word buruj literally means a castle or fort. But scholars differ as to its exact meaning in this context.

Among the numerous phenomena of our solar system is the constant revolution of the earth around the sun. Its revolution has a fixed orbit and is completed in one year. Due to the elliptical shape of its orbit and the sun not being at its exact centre, the different seasons occur. Besides its revolution, the earth rotates on its axis and this is completed in twenty-four hours. This rotation is the cause of day and night.

In the vastness of space, the revolution and rotation of the earth with extreme precision and their being greatly subservient to human beings' interests, are the most wonderful of happenings. One who ponders over these blessings will be overwhelmed with feelings of gratitude to God. □



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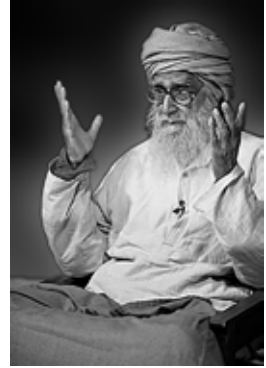
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ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan in a Panel Discussion on Unity in Diversity at India International Centre, Delhi in March, 2014.



Do you agree with the understanding that Ultimate Reality, whatever it is called, has to be One and that It is ineffable, that It is too great to be described in words?

According to Islam Ultimate Reality is another name for God. The Islamic concept of God is based on *tawhid*, or the oneness of God and He alone is the Creator and Sustainer of everything.

Islam stresses duality—there is a Creator and His creatures. Reality is not only a matter of belief but also conviction. It is necessary to express that conviction in words else it is neither recognized nor understood. Reality or God can be expressed in words.

I don't wish to question the intent of proselytisation that seeks to bring others into one's religious fold. But is it possible for followers of a tradition that believes in proselytisation to truly respect religious diversity? Are they not bound to treat religious diversity as a provisional state of affairs and cherish the hope that this state of affairs will eventually be overcome when the gap between the self and the other will be bridged via religious conversion?

According to my study, conversion is alien to Islam. The Islamic concept is based on *marifat*, which means self-realization. According to Islam, the reality of God is a matter of self-realization.

The word 'conversion', indicates that there are two persons— the person who converts and the other, the person who engages in trying to make others convert, from one religion to another.

This concept is not present in Islam. Islam teaches that everyone must try to discover Reality on their own, because without discovery and self-realization, there is no conviction. Conviction is very important in Islam.

On the question of religious diversity, I would say that dealing with religious diversity is not a matter of religious belief. Rather, it is a matter of social ethics. Belief is a personal matter, while religious diversity is a social subject. It poses the issue of how to live in a religiously diverse society and a diverse world.

It is a fact that there are differences in every aspect of life. These differences are due to the law of nature and cannot be eliminated. It is unrealistic during dialogue to try to establish one's superiority. The purpose of dialogue is to find how different sections of society can co-exist peacefully. Diversity in society can never be eliminated. So, bringing an end to diversity can never be the goal of dialogue. Its goal is peaceful co-existence.

If so, what is the truth? It is subject of personal pursuit, and not of social discussion or social gatherings. It is everyone's problem to find the truth in which they can believe, because a person cannot live without conviction.

This issue has two aspects. One aspect relates to the individual. Each individual must attempt to live by conviction and recognize the truth. The other aspect is to maintain social harmony. Experience shows that social harmony is achieved only by adopting the formula of co-existence. There is no other option.

Each is free to adopt a religious belief by choice, but being members of society, we must learn to live peacefully with people who hold other religious beliefs. Believing strongly in a particular religion, being firmly convinced about it, and at the same time living peacefully with people who follow or believe in other religions are not contradictory to each other. The human mind has enormous capacity, including peaceful coexistence with people who believe differently.

Allow me to cite my own example. I believe in one Reality in one religion, and I can say that I have love for everyone. I believe in Jesus Christ's call to love one's enemies. If you operate on my heart, you will find there is no hate inside for anyone, only love for everyone.

When the Prophet of Islam was in Madinah, a funeral procession of a Jew passed by. The Prophet was seated at that time. On seeing the procession, he stood up in respect. One of his companions said to him that the deceased was a Jew, not a Muslim. And the Prophet responded,

“Was he not a human being?”

Every human being has equal status in his or her capacity of being human. There’s no difference whatsoever.

Can you please say a prayer to unite us all?

I’ll recite a prayer of the Prophet. He used to pray thus:

Allahumma antas-salam wa minkas-salam ilayka yarjius salam hayyana rabbana bis-salam wa adkhilna daraka daras-salam tabarakta rabbana wa talaita ya dhal jalalae wal ikram

‘O God, You are peace, peace comes from You, peace returns to You. O God, bless us to live in peace with all. O God, grant us entry into Your Home of Peace. O God, You are great, glory be to You!’ □



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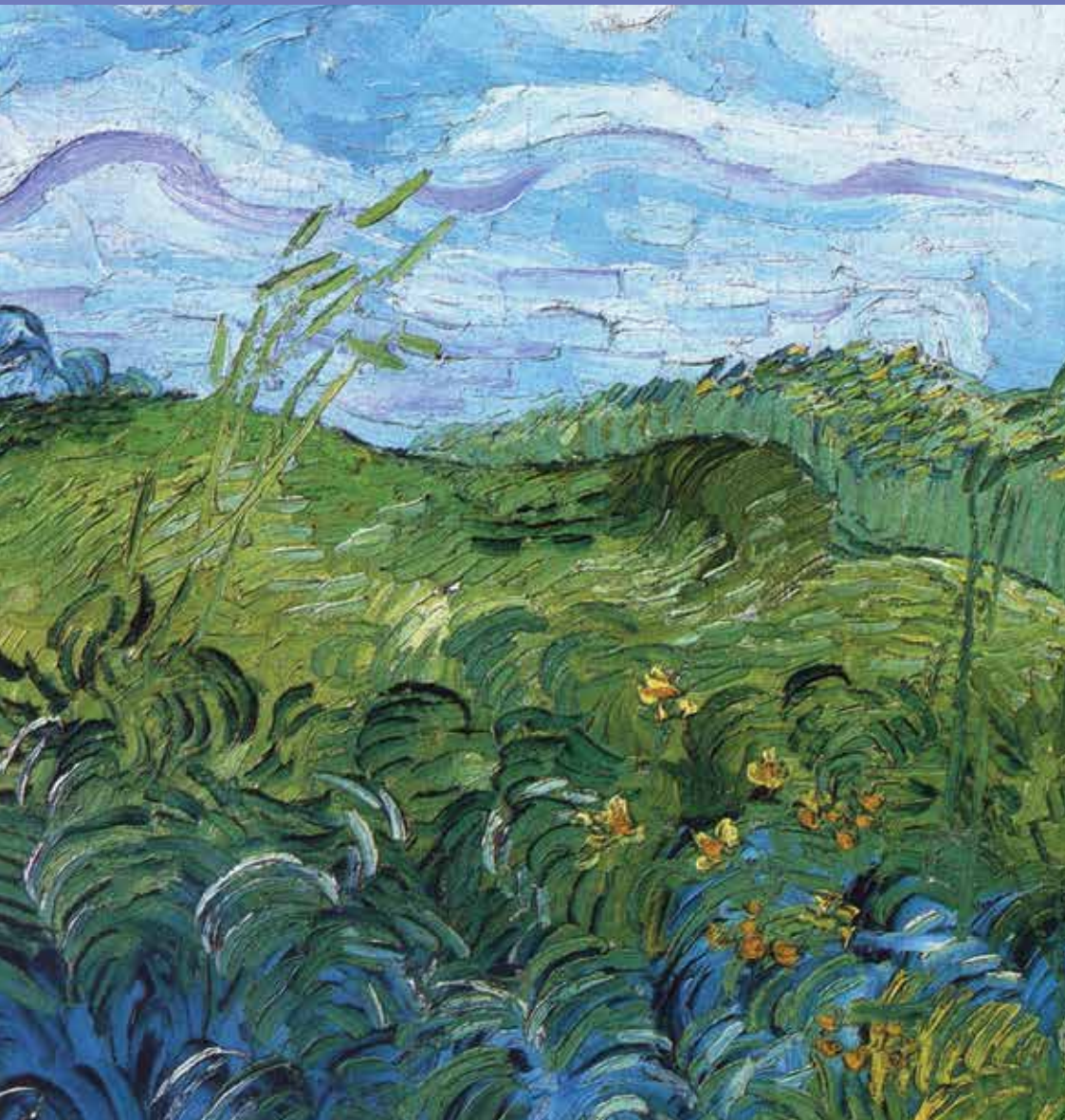
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